GMA orders massive evacuation as 'Zigzag' nears

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WHAT'S INSIDE

- Gov't to pursue peace with Reds despite threats NEWS/A3
- Bible saw ex old man from muddy grave NEWS/A2
- Suspected SARS in China WORLD/A8

THE 2,000-YEAR-OLD stone arikan, the largest man-made structure in the world and one of the wonders of man's heritage, is unclear today after Friday's earthquake. The citadel's grandeur is immortalized in a 1975 photo (inset).

World unites to aid Iran

Tehran to accept help from all countries, except Israel

GENEVA—US President George W. Bush, who once branded Iran part of an "axis of evil," and other world leaders on Saturday stepped up aid to Iran, which is struggling to cope with an earthquake disaster that killed at least 20,000 people.

A spokesperson for Iran's interior ministry, however, said Tehran would accept aid from all foreign countries, except Israel. "The Islamic Republic of Iran accepts all kinds of humanitarian aid from all countries and international organizations with the exception of the Zionist regime," Ahmadinezhad. Khatami's foreign was quoted as saying by Iran's official news agency.

Like Israel, the United States has no official ties with Tehran. But Bush said in a statement: "We stand ready to help the people of Iran."

A spokesperson for Bush said the United States would be offering humanitarian aid, and a US official said an aid package would be announced soon.

Washington broke diplomatic relations with the Islamic republic after militant students stormed the US Embassy in Tehran in 1979, and held 52 Americans hostage for 444 days. Bush has also accused Iran of trying to secretly develop weapons of mass destruction.

The United Nations, European Union members, Russia, China, Poland, Japan, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Australia and other countries heeded Iran's appeals for help from the international community.

They pledged to send doctors, medical supplies, financial aid, and rescuers with sniffer dogs and special equipment to locate survivors.

Swiss rescuers with sniffer dogs were the first foreign team to start hunting for trapped survivors. A 59-strong British rescue team with sniffer dogs, special cameras and listening devices also touched down in Iran, near the city of Bam.

A YOUNG Iranian cries in fear after rains in Bam, after an earthquake measuring 6.3 on the Richter scale devastated the southeastern Iranian city on Friday. Promises of assistance for the disaster victims have poured in from the international community, even from the United States—which has accused Iran of being part of an "axis of evil."

Death toll could reach 40,000

BAM, Iran—The only smiles were on the faces of a movie poster on the wall of a cinema. Everywhere were men and women digging their own faces and hearing their chests in an Islamic ritual of mourning.

A powerful earthquake on Friday has destroyed much of Iran's historic landmark—a giant medieval fortress complex of towers, domes and walls of mud brick, overlooking a walled Old City parts of which date back 2,000 years. Television images showed the highest part of the fort—including its distinctive square towers—crumbled like a sand castle down the side of the hill, although some walls still stood.

In a statement on Saturday, the ministry of interior placed the provisional death toll at 20,000 with more than 30,000 people injured.

CONTINUED ON A2

Bonus: Great divide in gov't service

By PDI Research

SAME government, different bonuses.

All government employees, whether permanent, contractual or elected, have received their mandated annual 13th month pay and P5,000 cash gift. But in this season of bonuses, barely five months before the national elections, Santa Claus came to government officers, bringing different cash gifts. About 1.4 million govern-

A2/COL 3

CPP paranoia over spies led to witch-hunt, purge

By Jose V. Sarmiento Jr.

(Third of five parts)

SPECIAL REPORT

INSURGENCY drove the Communist Party of the Philippines into a witch-hunting frenzy in the 1990s.

It came to a point that party members could be tagged military spies on the basis of their being too hardworking or too brave in a region in Mindanao. Homosexuality was accepted as a tell-tale sign that a party member was a spy, according to a former member of the CPP Central Committee [hereinafter to be referred to as CC].

Setbacks in the battlefield, in which New People's Army commanding officers got shot in the back after unleashing government forces, also fed speculation that military spies had infiltrated the underground movement.

What further fueled the panic that triggered the purging, then, the anti-infiltration campaign conducted by the CPP-Mindanao Commission (Mindanao) in 1985, was a series of attacks of party leaders in the cities of Davao and Cagayan de Oro in the early 1980s, as well as a report that a party member then being interrogated by the military heard the voice of the head of the Northern Mindanao regional committee.

Al also said the arrest of some senior cadres in the late 1970s and early 1980s—and their subsequent release on the condition that they give information to the military—strengthened the paranoia. If senior cadres were afraid of Imad the dead, what more those in the lower ranks?

Also started in Cagayan de Oro, a "white area," with the arrest of three suspected deep penetration agents in May 1985.

When interrogated, the party members "confessed" to being spies. "They also said those in the regional committee were government agents," Al said, adding:

"The pattern of admission and pointing to people was always the same."

The pattern of admission and pointing to people was always and upward nationwide because of the use of torture."

As the local units were weeding out suspected DBMs, the Mindanao caretaker committee took the initiative to coordinate the purges.

At the time, four Mindanao members had left the island for a Central Committee plenum in Luzon. The plenum started in March and ended in October.

The caretaker committee adopted the methods for the arrest and interrogation of suspects

CPP-MILITANCIES A2

Evacuation ordered as 'Zigzag' nears

By Juliet Labog-Javellana and Vic Caoyonan

LEAVE or face landslides.

President Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday ordered a massive evacuation of residents living in upland and landslide-prone areas in the Visayas and Mindanao that were expected to be hit by tropical depression "Zigzag" at 8 last night.

The order came a week after heavy rain triggered landslides and floods that killed at least 193 people in Southern Leyte and northeastern Mindanao.

Mr Macapagal said only those living in upland areas planned to evacuate and agricultural products had to be evacuated.

Looking at a shaded map, Mr Macapagal identified the provinces and places to be hit by Zigzag. These are the southern tip of Samar, two-thirds of Leyte island which covers the entire Southern Leyte, two-thirds of Cebu and Negros Island, Surigao del Norte, Agusan del Norte, Misamis Oriental and Bukidnon, Lanao del Norte and Sur, part of Maguindanao and the whole of western Mindanao, including Zamboanga del Sur and Norte, Misamis Occidental and Basilan.

While Zigzag is not a strong weather disturbance, it will hit the same areas affected by the landslides in Southern Leyte and other areas where the soil had been loosened by torrential rains, according to Mr Macapagal.

"So we want a massive evacuation. We're asking the LGUs [local government units] to have a massive evacuation of all those who live on slopes beyond 18 degrees, which are planted to crops and agricultural products. After that we will have to change what they plant," she told reporters after convening the

DISCUSSION A2

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

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WEATHER FORECAST

Second FRONTPAGE

Erap can't be trusted to return, justices told

By Armando N. Nocum

IF FORMER senator and president Joseph Estrada could say with a straight face that he is not now Velicaria, could he be trusted to keep his word to return after seeking medical treatment abroad?

A private prosecutor narrowed the flood gates of sympathy against setting Estrada free.

"Nichols does not understand what it means to get the benefit of jurisdiction, and thus is required [to] bow," Deputy Ombudsman Emilio Gonzalez III told the Supreme Court.

Gonzalez, a law professor at the University of the Philippines, was reacting to Estrada's charge that people who were speculating that he meant to run to the Bahamas, with which the Philippines has no extradition treaty, were "intelligent."

In a statement, Gonzalez said: "Estrada's promise to return — notes Pryce's email at his address at a condominium TV that he signed as Joseph Velicaria Ejercito Estrada — is hardly there a more value behind what seems people's meanings for taking leaving people ... and one nothing wrong with it."

Estrada has consistently denied creating the alias Velicaria, whose name appears on documents purchasing a total of P3.2 million. He claims Velicaria is the alias of a man, Jaime Dichaves, who has died in Colombia.

The Ombudsman has thereby granted Estrada's motion to leave the country on condition that he file a "personal undertaking" promising to return and recognizing the "authority of the court over his person and over the cases filed against him."

Estrada's conviction now "is complete," the Ombudsman's lawyers said, "and he is now being given "a world of a window" to escape, "a privilege never before granted to any accused charged with a non-bailable crime," Gonzalez pointed out. Whether or not he would take due windows dependent was on his promise, the court has on his appreciation of how strong the case against him is, and on how well he'll treat, since Fernando Poe Jr., professor in most year's presidential run.

One of Estrada's own opposition lawyers, Mel Sibayan, admitted in a phone interview that he was working for "a big problem" drafting the personal undertaking for Estrada, who has refused to recognize the authority of the court, claiming that he is still president.

But Estrada's lawyers in the Sandiganbayan are not indicators, he said. "He does...down by the gate in the terms and the prospect of going pardoned—ought be prepared to be violated."

In the letter dated Dec. 11, Estrada said he was "compelled to appeal to your honorable sense of compassion on account of the pain that I am undergoing and suffering."

Lambino's presentation may be the straw that more backbreaking piece, the prosecutors told Presidential Spokesperson Ignacio Bunye said the President was pleased with the Sandiganbayan decision, but would not want to comment individually on "cases pending in court." And there, he said, she wouldn't consider her opinion, which may include reminding Estrada on absence—for the former President."

On Friday, the Ombudsman said the Palace might never succeed in securing a UN visa.

With reports from Julie L. Arevalo

After 'blue' Christmas, Erap has kinder view of justices

By Armando Nocum

NOW THAT they have granted his wish to undergo knee surgery in the United States, accused President Joseph Estrada now has a kinder opinion of the Sandiganbayan justices.

The justices, after all, are "compassionate, understanding and independent." "We cannot fault the men who had accused them of bias and badmouthed to recognize their authority.

Estrada speculated that "medical justice" must have played a part in the decision of the special division to grant him a three-month medical leave in the US. Now he is praising the independence of the anti-graft court, led by Presiding Justice Gloria Diaz Estrada. The other members of the three-judge division to exercise leader Estrada / Leonardo-de Castro, both widely favored, are also lauded.

"I thank the justices of the Sandiganbayan for being compassionate and understanding of my plight," Estrada told the reporters in a telephone interview.

Estrada had to be part to attend to recognize the authority of the anti-graft court, claiming he was still President. He reversed his stand for the abolition of the special division of the Sandiganbayan, claiming it was specifically created to convict him. He is for what he promises.

Asked if he now believes the court's independence, Estrada replied: "I believe so."

Despite the court's decision, Estrada described his Christmas—his third behind bars—as "blues than blue" because he was not allowed to visit his relatives.

He said his family led by Sen. Jinggoy Estrada, visited him but their visit not very long, because they still had to go to their relatives.

He said no one else visited him.

'MIRACLE' IN LEYTE

Bible saves old man from muddy grave

By Rob Cuaresma

ABOUT the book and devotional owned by the Gen. 29 parishioner may be one of biggest in believers today, a copy of "Biblical" which was said to have been given.

Dean Bacho, his wife is evangelical man, 68-year-old Lorenzo Valverde of Barangay Palma, San Francisco town, had the habit of bringing the Bible down to his body when he is injured or sick.

The same Bible was among of the "children" which the old man was clinging up close by innocent forces after a series of mud, he knew more comprehension by days of heavy rains engulfed his neighborhood.

The survival was made more astonishing for the fact that many were less corpses on top of him when he was found, said Social Welfare Secretary Corazon "Dinky" Soliman.

"His wife said Father received Gods due he made a vow after a bonanza of his religiously," Soliman, who was the couple in an interview center in San Francisco last Dec. 23, said in an interview interview yesterday.

Lahuerta was still in shock and still "able and honor" when local locals workers provided to help in the worst, she revealed.

The couple received cash assistance from President Aquino, whom Soliman accompanied during their visit to San Francisco that day.

The Department of Social Welfare and Development disclosed yesterday that the national government had sent over P6 million worth of relief goods and equipment for the rehabilitation of the landslide victims.

The donations, several were in the DSWD by Japanese Embassy officials who figures, were in the form of power generators, water bottles, mats, blankets, plastic sheets, chemical carpentry kits.

The DSWD also reported that one of the 123 evacuation centers set up at the height of the emergency, with 27 families, is now closed. In operation as of yesterday serving 1,446 families or 7,803 persons.

An additional 1,367 families or 6,261 are being served by relief workers outside the centers.

Total cost of assistance to the victims have reached P6.88 million, of which P2 million came from the DSWD, P3.4 from local governments, and about P480,000 from other government agencies and NGOs.

The death toll has reached 138, of which 121 were identified. Still, a total of 137 families were from Southern Leyte while 27 more were from the Caraga region.

YEAR OF THE MONKEY
An Orangutan named Pacquiao is an instant celebrity at the Malabon Zoo as he turns it up with (see corner Manny Pangco in ring-cut) the old year, which saw hosting champ Manny Pacquiao rise to new heights, and in the year of the [what else?] monkey (JOHN BALTAZAR)

Parties play waiting game with final tickets

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

THE ADMINISTRATION and opposition camps are playing the waiting game, holding off announcements of their respective slates until the other's is revealed.

Roseing Secretary Mike Defensor, campaign spokesperson for the President, said the President's team would not be announced until after New Year and close to the extended deadline of the filing of certificates of candidacy on Jan. 3.

"It won't happen before the end of the year," Defensor said.

He said the administration would like to see who the opposition candidates would be.

Defensor also said the vice presidential candidates are not yet coming out partly because independent Sen. Nick de Castro has yet to make his decision known.

"I think that when the vice presidential candidates declares, it is only then that things will become clear," Defensor said.

He said a declaration by De Castro would be the turning point for the vice presidential race.

"There's nothing final as of now but my personal outlook is Robayon (De Castro's nickname) plays a pivotal role in the vice presidential race. If he declares, then people will have to decide if they will run against him. For example, will Sen. Loren Legarda and Gov. (Robert) Barbers still run for vice president?," Defensor said.

He said there would be "an influx" of vice presidential candidates if De Castro decides not to run for the position.

Asked about reports that De Castro would be Ms Macapagal's running mate, Defensor said: "You have to accept the fact that Robin is a leading candidate not just for the vice presidency but also to the presidency. So whatever his decision would be will be the turning point of what will happen in these dates."

Defensor said there would be no political or economic deals in the effort to get De Castro drafted as Ms Macapagal's running mate. De Castro was a personality of MIO-CBN, a company owned by De Lopez group that also owns the Manila Electric Co. and water franchise.

But he said there would surely be a discussion on what Cabinet position De Castro could hold in case current position, that is if he and Ms Macapagal win the polls.

"I don't think there will be dealings or offers but I'm sure there will be a governance question. As Vice President, what position or value are the departments that may be placed under the auspices of the Vice President," Defensor said.

Gov't to pursue peace with Reds despite threats

THE GOVERNMENT would still pursue efforts to reopen peace talks with communist guerrillas despite the soon rebel threat to disturb more attacks, the spokesperson of President Macapagal-Arroyo said yesterday.

"Because we feel the peace initiatives are continuing, hopefully until we can bring the two sides back to the negotiating table," Presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunye said.

"We want long lasting peace but we will observe the noncombatant actions," of the Insurgent Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and its guerrilla army, the New People's Army (NPA) Bunye said in a radio interview.

He remains same after CPP central committee chair Armando Liwanag called on guerrillas to further "expand and intensify" tactical attacks and "strike anything down" the government of President Macapagal.

The party would "extend the guerrilla fronts to the majority of municipalities, especially those in the strategic parts of the archipelago," Liwanag said in a statement issued on Friday marking the CPP's 36th anniversary.

The government is expected to hold a new peace month with the RNO National Democratic Front, and as a gesture of goodwill declared a unilateral Christmas truce with the rebels until Jan. 6.

Meanwhile, in the southern Philippines, MNLF guerrillas used the truce as an occasion to hold a public getting rather dirty hazard of running money from politicians campaigning for the May national elections.

Jorge Madlos, spokesperson for the insurgents in the southern island of Mindanao, told an anonymous gathering in Agusan del Sur province, that they were charging a minimum of P50,000 for mayoral candidates to get "permits to campaign" in areas where the NPA are active.

"It depends on the negotiating capacity of the individual candidate," Madlos said, adding that some mayoral candidates were being charged as much as P500,000 and that candidates for higher positions were charged even more.

In the past, candidates without rebel passes had been ambushed.

Madlos said that the guerrillas would still advise peasants to raise arms who to vote for, regardless of who qualifies "permits to campaign."

The 9,000-strong guerrilla movement has been waging a Maoist rebellion for 34 years.

President Macapagal suspended peace talks with the rebels in 2001 after the NPA assassinated several high-profile politicians. AFP

Ping to file certificate of candidacy tomorrow

By Marinell Marfil

THE ELECTION form heats up with the first of, say presidential aspirant, Sen. Panfilo Lacson, set to file his certificate of candidacy tomorrow.

Lacson's camp wants no less than Comelec czar Ilocandia chair Benjamin Abalos present when the former national police chief makes his bid official.

In a phone interview, Abalos said there was no need for him to meet with the senator since there were Comelec officials assigned to receive certificates of candidacy.

But he said one of Lacson's leaders, Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile, earlier called to say the candidate wanted to pay him a "courtesy call" as well.

Asked whether he would receive the visitor then, the Comelec chief said: "I will be there. I hope this will not be misunderstood."

Abalos' office is handling a petition concerning Lacson's quest to be the opposition party's standard-bearer.

Aside from Lacson, the Comelec is hearing for the possible appearance of another serious presidential aspirant, actor Fernando Poe Jr., despite earlier reports that he was being convinced to postpone filing his candidacy to Jan. 5, the last day.

As of yesterday, at least 11 presidential hopefuls have filed their candidacies even while lacking at least three hallmarks of a serious bid. They are without political parties, not nationally known, and incapable of launching nationwide campaigns.

Lacson is heading for the Lakas ng Demokratikong Pilipino nomination, and is being pitted against Enrile, who is supported by LDP president Sen. Edgardo Angara.

Even GMA must pay fee for NPA permit to campaign

SAMOA, Kalayaan del Sur—Even President Macapagal-Arroyo will be required to pay a fee for a permit to campaign (PTC) if she promotes her candidacy in areas influenced by communist rebels.

This was the announcement made by the National Democratic Front (NDF) during Friday's celebration of the communist movement's 36th anniversary.

Jorge Madlos, NDF spokesperson in Mindanao, said the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) recently came out with new guidelines and policies that would be strictly enforced during the 2004 elections.

These guidelines and policies, he said, included the collection of full fees prior to the issuance of PTCs.

Madlos said based on their experiences, some politicians pay half of the required fee during the campaign and promises to pay in full after the elections.

"Unserious those who just usually do not pay anymore while the winning candidates either pay it in full, in kind or whatever depends on the negotiations," he said.

Madlos said the "revolutionary government" was aiming for more funds out of PTC fees to finance its land reform and social services like basic education, health programs and the daily spending for guerrillas.

In 2001, Madlos said the communist movement in Mindanao earned about P40 million.

In enforcing stricter collections, Madlos said even known Manila, which is viewed as left leaning, would not be exempted from PTC fees.

"All of them, whether automobile or progressive, have to pay if they want to campaign and win the elections politically in our areas," he said.

But while candidates for higher posts were being required to pay up to P1 million, Madlos said those running for seat in the councils were only required to make donations as "token of respect."

"They are not required to pay much because we know that they have only limited money," he said.

In a phone interview with the Inquirer in Davao City, Madlos successfully warned Philippine Marines (PM) against the PTC fees "because politicians have no choice but to give in" to the revolutionary group's demand.

"The marines has been done for the past years and there's no way to stop it," Madlos said.

He said politicians campaigning in "NPA-populated areas" have some sense of security for securing PTC.

Madlos also insulted the people's statement that politicians securing PTCs would be threatened, saying the NPA would never release names.

Besides, Madlos said it would be impossible for the police to prosecute "almost all politicians aspiring for government positions." Grace C. Alfonso and Anthony S. Alfonso, PhilMindanao Bureau

Sison on purges: Law of contradiction operates everywhere

SISON. CPP founder

JOSE Maria Jose (JMJ), founding chair of the Communist Party of the Philippines now based in the Netherlands, cited "the law of contradiction" in trying to explain why the purges happened. Their aim? The answers to the questions a reader is bound to have if he reviews it.—Ed.

Inquirer: Did you not have any inkling that something like Oplan Missing Link (the conflict between Tagalog, an anti-Olympia in Metro Manila, and other purges such as those in Northern Luzon and Eastern Visayas was happening in 1987-89?

JMJ: I got some amount of hearsay and reliable statements from various people. You must take into account the distance between The Netherlands and the Philippines, particularly the Olympia purges because a Philippine news and any kind of report about it. By the way you do not mention Rampanyang Abos, which was the very worst of the bloody witch hunts.

Inquirer: Was there any effort on the part of the local leadership to consult you on how to conduct the purges?

JMJ: As an issue here I was much troubled inwardly for months on end over many questions regarding what you call "purges." Primarily, I am always ready to discuss with anyone the correct principles and methods of investigation, prosecution, trial and evaluation of evidence. I am drawn from my knowledge and experience as a student of Marxism, teacher of principles/tactics and victim of factions and counterrevolution.

You are using the term "purge" with some special connotation or connotations, even as feudal, bourgeois and proletarian parties use the same term in common and to pretend to mean something from the membership but chose instead inactive, decimated or extant. As any sure, you should be pleased that the CPP uses for attempts (some serious, studious, etc.) to condemn and repudiate the crimes involved in the events that you have mentioned.

Contradiction

Inquirer: Why did the purges happen?

JMJ: The law of contradiction operates everywhere. In revolutionary party of the working class can be penetrated by bad elements or parts or even the majority of it can degenerate. Bloody witchhunts can thus ensue if the proletarian revolutionaries and the people are not vigilant and militant in handling the problems of penetration and degeneration. The CPP should be praised for rectifying the political errors of opportunism, for confronting the crimes and upholding the principle and right of the masses. The terrible crimes have been able to consolidate, revitalize and better strengthen the CPP and it reflect the entire revolutionary movement.

Inquirer: Who should be held responsible?

JMJ: On the basis of available CPP publications, I think that the CPP and other revolutionary organizations and the people can correct know but who are responsible be definite enough. But there are of course common revolutionaries and plain muddleheads who simply say that the victory of Marxism-Leninism or the victory of CPP is responsible.

It is like some people saying that liberal democracy and liberal democratic parties are forever disqualified by the reign of terror in the French Revolution or that the Catholic Church is eternally no good because of the notorious witchhunts and inquisitions in its history or that the old democratic revolutions in the Philippines was invalidated because Emilio Aguinaldo was culpable for the killing of brothers Bonifacio and Antonio Luna.

Bonifacio, founder of the Katipunan, which launched the Philippine Revolution in 1896, was killed by the men of Aguinaldo, leader of a faction of the Katipunan who became the President of the First Philippine Republic. Luna, a general in the First Republic, was also killed by Aguinaldo's men.]

CPP paranoia over spies led to witch-hunt, purge

NEW People's Army guerrillas in formation.

first used in the 1960 anti-infiltration campaign in the Quezon-Bicol Zone (QBZ).

Copies of the document on the history of the anti-DPA campaign were disseminated to other regions after it was declared a "big success."

Purges was extensively used in the QBZ campaign also known as Cadena de Amor, in reference to the military's anti-insurgency drive of the same name.

"The [Marcos-era] generally followed the pattern and methods adopted in Cadena de Amor," Al said.

Special units were formed to go after suspected agents from Mindanao working in Metro Manila, Cebu and other places of as the CPP Executive Committee set up a task force to operate there.

In an attempt to rein in Abra, the Mindanao mixed a set of guidelines in late October to which "generally, torture was not allowed," Al said.

"But we allowed soft torture, which is an undefined notion," he said. "And we did not deal with the fact that party members had their rights upon arrest."

Luxury

Al said the concept of due process was twisted in Samapaguita. "It's a luxury that can be afforded under normal conditions, but not in a guerrilla war. The survival of the party was more important."

While Mao was going on, an anti-DPA campaign was taking place in southern Luzon, which moves such names as Lopez, Gen. and Luna and Calauag. "Keep killing" was supposed to part by the RPA's arrest of witnesses after government's Oplan Isuna [a future Kwan, who admitted that there was a military campaign to infiltrate the underground movement through infiltration].

Based on people presented in Talag-Alba, some 30 were killed, including civilians, mostly prostitutes. The regional committee ordered it stopped in 1988.

The Mindanao supposedly stopped Abra in December 1985, but it continued up to March 1986 in Misamis Oriental and Bukidnon, the region that accounted for the bulk of those killed.

Not only cadres but also sub-sympathizers fell victim to Abra.

By Al's account, the "most loyal" were those people, usually peasants, whose family members were killed by the military. They were joined LIPA "the lowest form of animal," he said.

The result was devastating. At least 400 to as many 1,500 cadres and supporters of the communist movement were reported to have died in the campaign. Many were buried in mass graves.

Excesses

Nevertheless, the CPP Politburo declared Abra in 1987 "open-ended," although there were excesses," said an ex-member of a regional committee in Mindanao.

RPAs were killed but the methods were excessive and unprofessional. At school, "those were extremely traumatized."

Because of the excesses in Abra, the Politburo imposed an "absolute ban" on torture. But an acceptance "that there had to be limits" to the rights of detained party members advocated by the Abra campaign fueled resentment and infiltration in other regions and organs," the CPP said in a 1992 document titled "General Review of Important Events and Decisions (1968-1992)."

What helped spark renewed fears of infiltration were the arrests in Metro Manila in March 1988 of party leaders, including Romulo "Rudy" Kintanar, then head of the NPA general command; Rafael Baylosis, alleged CPP secretary general; and Benjamin de Vera, alleged member of the Executive Committee.

Antonio Zumel, also allegedly of the Executive Committee, was arrested a year earlier.

Olympia

Amid the arrests and the government's mopped-up anti-insurgency campaign, "Olympia" was launched in 1988 for the Manila-Rizal Regional Committee and CPP national organs based in Metro Manila. Similar witchhunts were conducted in Southern Luzon and Eastern Visayas.

In Manila-Rizal, the arrests of suspected infiltrators began after an investigation of the enemy's arrest and "salvaging" of an NPA in member of the urban armed group Alex Boncayao Brigade], the CPP said.

It added: "The National Organization Commission implemented a 1987 decision to arrest a cadre who had been implicated as a result of investigations made during the Abra campaign, and proceeded to investigate other suspects. The United Front Commission and Central Committee were also implicated by the arrests of the arrests and interrogations undertaken by the Manila-Rizal Party Committee."

The Executive Committee subsequently issued orders for the arrest and investigation of CPP suspects. It also directed provincial cadres on what had been discovered as an infiltration network.

In Southern Tagalog, the regional committee's over-anti-DPA campaign, which was linked to a new labor passed by a conference—an expanded meeting convened from December 1985 to April 1986—that sought an investigation of the regions and momentary exercises of committee members in 1977.

A 1987 directive from the Executive Committee for the regional officers to review the bourgeois party members and "to check if there had a relative in the military in light of the infiltration now unveiled the regional committee.

"We were alarmed because cases [of] transgressions and [arrests] infiltrated. This was what happened in Mindoro," a conference participant said.

Further adding to the panic was the 1988 General Commander's advisory to the regional committees as its plenum in December 1987 that the command was holding members of an NPA national support group known as the Bienvenido 11, among whom were communist defectors.

Eight of the 11 were later brought to the camp of the regional committee for "sabbaging," a former senior cadre said.

The regional committee also developed a sympathizer in Calamba, Laguna, he investigated because it had been observed that party members who visited his house were later raided by the military according to the confessions participants.

Ludicrous lies

As part of the investigation, the Southern Tier Command, the NPA unit in Southern Tagalog, was directed to arrest three people, suggesting the start of Operation Missing Link (OPML).

By early 1988, Task Force OPML was in place with Ramos, a list of Rebel Lualhati and an investigation officer of the urban committee, as head. Chato, head of the Melito Glor Command, supervised the task force.

The methods used by the task force were patterned after those of Abra. The OPML had to learn from Southern Luzon because Abra was 60 percent successful, as of December 1986 [when] Southern Luzon commission reported said.

The OPML adopted the rules—but practiced in Cadena de Amor and Abra in Abra—of arresting a suspect based on the confessions of at least two "infiltrators."

But here, the confessions of three infiltrators become the norm in Southern Tagalog.

The inspirations were quickly met because Task Force OPML relied heavily on torture in extracting information from suspects.

It was during celebrations of the 20th Guerrilla Command's [national intelligence officers' Training], who pushed for methods of torture aimed at humiliating suspects, and a former senior cadre.

The opinions of two lawyers strengthened the use of torture in the OPML.

The lawyers, who were invited to the regional committee's [main] quarters in Quezon for their advice on the rights of prisoners of war, said soldiers had rights under the Geneva Conventions but cadres had none, according to two senior cadres.

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With the lawyers' advice and the go-signal from the heads of the Southern Luzon Commission, who was supposed to guide the task force, Ramos became more

confident in his methods.

He began to torture suspects, using the rest of Operation Missing Link (OPML).

By early 1988, Task Force OPML was in place with Ramos, a list of Rebel Lualhati and an investigation officer of the urban committee, as head. Chato, head of the Melito Glor Command, supervised the task force.

The methods used by the task force were patterned after those of Abra. The OPML had to learn from Southern Luzon because Abra was 60 percent successful, as of December 1986 [when] Southern Luzon commission reported said.

The OPML adopted the rules—but practiced in Cadena de Amor and Abra in Abra—of arresting a suspect based on the confessions of at least two "infiltrators."

But here, the confessions of three infiltrators become the norm in Southern Tagalog.

The inspirations were quickly met because Task Force OPML relied heavily on torture in extracting information from suspects.

It was during celebrations of the 20th Guerrilla Command's [national intelligence officers' Training], who pushed for methods of torture aimed at humiliating suspects, and a former senior cadre.

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High court affirms 40-year sentence on rapist

By Philip C. Tubeza

THE SUPREME Court has affirmed the life sentence of a construction worker who raped a 14-year-old barmaid in a resthouse inside an Army camp in Tarlac [illegible] in March 1998.

In a 15-page decision, the high court's Third Division upheld a lower court's ruling that sentenced Raul S. Palanco to a maximum of 40 years in prison for abusing the girl inside Camp Capinpin in Tarlac.

"Undoubtedly, the victim's testimony bears all the hallmarks of truth which cannot be defeated by lame denial. Her straightforward narration of the facts leads the Court to conclude that the trial court was correct in convicting [him] of the crime charged," said the decision penned by Justice Renato Dacudao.

Moral damages

The tribunal also slapped an additional P50,000 in moral damages on the P50,000 in civil indemnity that the Olongapo, Zbal Region al Trial Court ordered Palanco to pay the victim when it convicted him on Oct. 4, 1999.

Court records showed that the rape happened at around 7 p.m. on March 17, 1998 as the victim was walking home inside the camp with her 18-year-old niece after they enjoined a payment for the karaoke bar they sold.

"While they were walking along a dark and isolated road inside the camp, the victim was suddenly accosted by Palanco. He poked his 45 pistol around her neck and pulled a knife to her side, warning her not to resist," the ruling said.

The accused dragged her to his hut inside which he ordered the others to tell her niece to leave. The younger girl initially refused but later left because of him.

The culprit then proceeded to sexually [illegible] her with the victim inside the hut despite her efforts to resist.

After the was raped, the victim was able to convince Palanco to let her go after she noticed him that she would not file any charges. Fearing sure that she would not [illegible] later, the rapist even followed her home.

But when the victim's brother opened their house's door and asked her about the man who was following her, she reported that Palanco raped her.

Her brother then contacted the barangay authorities, who arrested Palanco.

PCGG now has 45 lawyers

THE NUMBER of lawyers working for the Presidential Commission on Good Government has increased.

The PCGG now has around 45 lawyers, excluding those with the Office of the Solicitor General, the Department of Justice and the Office of the Ombudsman.

When PCGG Chair Rayder Roxas assumed office in June 2001, the agency had only about a dozen lawyers.

The number was not enough to handle the numerous pending ill-gotten wealth cases against the Marcoses and their cronies.

Roxas would only confirm that they have at least "three times" the number.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Sunday, December 28, 2003
Holy Family

1st Reading: Sir 3:2-6, 12-14

For the Lord established that children should respect their father; he confirmed the right of the mother over her children.

Whoever honors his father atones for his sins, he who gives glory to his mother is like one who lays a treasure up.

Whoever honors his father will receive joy from his own children and will be heard when he prays.

Whoever glorifies his father will have a long life. Whoever obeys the Lord gives comfort to his mother.

My child, take care of your father in his old age, do not cause him sorrow as long as he lives.

Even if he has lost his mind, have patience; do not be disrespectful to him while you are in full health.

For kindness done to one's father will never be forgotten, it will serve as reparation for your sins.

Gospel: Lk 2:41-52

Every year the parents of Jesus went to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover, as was customary. And when Jesus was twelve years old, he went up with them according to the custom for the feast. After the festival was over, they returned, but the boy Jesus remained in Jerusalem and his parents did not know it.

They thought he was in the company and after walking the whole day, they looked for him among their relatives and friends. As they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem searching for him, and on the third day they found him in the Temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking questions. And all the people were amazed at his understanding and his answers.

His parents were very surprised when they saw him and his mother said to him, "Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I were very worried while searching for you." Then he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Do you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" But they did not understand this answer.

Jesus went down with them, returning to Nazareth, and he was obedient to his subject to them. As for his mother, she kept all these things in her heart.

And Jesus increased in wisdom and age, and in divine and human favor.

Commentary:

What are the qualities of parental loving at its best? As the shepherd, Manolo Wright, has suggested some characteristics of this special kind of love. Parental love is: (1) non-egocentric (capable of sensing the unique individuality and maturity of the child right from his or her own); (2) fallible (the parent's ability to adapt to the changing developmental stages of the child. Nonetheless, as well, the practice of constantly adapting for the loving thing to do for the child, at this stage in his or her life); (3) Finally, responsive, which involves the parent's ability to hand on hard-the skills for living and the wisdom to see what is worth living for and the parent's capacity to let the child go, to free his or her own life. Surely, all these qualities are present in Mary and Joseph in relation to Jesus. The time of struggle is then still deep in the future. Living him and hearing his answer, which they cannot understand, they will try to adjust, to understand, to adjust. In the end, years after this incident in the temple, they let him go—not without heartache no doubt—to do the work which the Father had marked out for him, as they themselves had grown to do in their own lives. Holy family of Nazareth, pray for parents and children everywhere.

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AKIHABARA family walks through the rubble in the devastated southeastern Iranian city of Bam. AFP

World unites to aid Iran

Bam, reels on Saturday

Italy, as the current president of the European Union, will coordinate EU aid to avoid duplication.

UN officials said they were releasing an immediate emergency grant of $100,000 to help treat hundreds of injured. The spokesman had seen reports to help assess the damage.

The world body's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (Ocha) said the UN team would also work to mobilize and review international assistance.

The immediate need was for medicines, tents, mobile hospitals, electricity generators, water purification equipment and blankets, Ocha official Madeleine Mukeba-Birnbaum said.

The UN children's fund (Unicef) said it was sending five aid kits and medical supplies. It called for $350,000 to donations.

Rapid response

Russia's emergencies ministry, lightly staffed in meeting its frequent natural and man-made disasters, offered rapid response units of rescuers, doctors and sniffer dog handlers to help find people buried under rubble.

"In accordance with an order from the head of state, emergency situations specialists are preparing to fly to Iran to give help to the injured," said a statement from President Vladimir Putin's press service after a meeting with Emergencies Minister Sergei Shoigu.

Xinhua news agency quoted the emergencies ministry as saying planes would leave for Iran on Saturday with 100 rescuers for searching collapsed buildings, 16 doctors and search dogs.

Australia, which has close ties with Iran, is building a nuclear power station near the southern city of Bushehr on the Gulf.

Italy was sending a C-130 military transport plane with a medical dog team, five brigade and search teams, fire and personal equipment said.

Agostino Miozzo, the official coordinating EU aid, said Poland was sending a field hospital and the Czech Republic, one of the 10 countries joining the bloc next year, had also offered help.

"This is the first time EU coordination is taking place for a disaster," Miozzo said.

A 50-person British rescue team with sniffer dogs, special cameras and listening devices left London on Friday night and was due to arrive in Kerman, near Bam, early on Saturday.

Britain's Foreign Minister Jack Straw offered Tehran help in rescuing earthquake survivors who may be trapped in collapsed buildings and to repair damage.

Turkey, which has plenty of experience in quake relief work, sent a plane carrying search and rescue teams and humanitarian aid to Iran. The aid included tents, blankets and medicines.

Asian aid

Nations across Asia also mobilized rescue workers and pledged several million dollars in aid and emergency supplies for Iran on Saturday.

Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi offered his condolences to Iranian President Mohammad Khatami and pledged to send 23 million yen (US$194,000) of blankets, power generators and other supplies. Foreign ministry official Shigeo Otsuka said.

The Japanese government and aid groups, including the Japanese Red Cross Society, were reportedly prepared to dispatch 20 emergency workers to the disaster area in Iran. The Japanese Red Cross Society also pledged 100 million yen (US$934,500) to assistance.

In Beijing, China said it was sending a 45-member rescue team and 1 million yuan (US$600,000) worth of tents and other supplies.

The team was due to leave Sunday, the official Xinhua News Agency reported.

Taiwan said it would donate US$100,000 in relief funds to Iran. A rescue team organized by the Taiwan Foreign Ministry also is scheduled to depart on Saturday night and arrive in Iran on Sunday.

Another rescue team formed by the private Buddhist Compassion Relief Tzu Chi Foundation will leave Sunday night for Tehran.

In the Philippines, where landslides killed almost 200 people earlier this week, President Macapagal-Arroyo released a statement mourning the victims of the quake in Iran.

"We know the pain and anguish brought by these disasters and we pray for the souls of those who perished and for the quick recovery of the wounded," she said.

Australian pledged A$2 million (US$1.48 million) for the relief effort.

Prime Minister John Howard said his government would consider increasing its contribution, adding that a large proportion of Australia's Iranian community was from quake-hit Kerman province.

"All Australians are shocked at the terrible loss of life," Howard said in a statement. "Our thoughts today go out to the victims of the disaster and the families and loved ones of those who perished.

The Australian Red Cross opened a public appeal and said it hopes to raise A$1.5 million (US$1.1 million) in contributions. Reports from Reuters, AP and AFP

Death toll could reach 40,000

But two senior officials involved in the relief operation in this southeastern city said they feared the final toll from Friday's earthquake could be 40,000 dead.

"By most leaders are pulled out, we fear that the death toll may reach as high as 40,000. An unbelievable human disaster has occurred," said Akbar Alami, the governor of Iranian city that housed provincial capital.

The leaders of a relief team, Ahmad Imani, said 40,000 dead was his estimate of the ultimate toll. In one street alone in Bam on Saturday, 300 bodies were extracted from the rubble in just an hour, Imani said.

Workers dug with shovels and even their bare hands to reach more bodies and possible survivors from the remains of flattened buildings in the city, whose population was about 80,000 until the quake. In some parts of the city bulldozers were moving the rubble.

Thousands of residents of the city spent Friday night outdoors, sleeping under blankets in temperatures close to freezing point. A few hundred slept in tents erected by relief workers.

The government appealed for aid from all countries and international organizations, saying it would waive visa requirements for foreign relief workers.

"The disaster is far too huge for governments all of our needs," President Mohammad Khatami said Friday. "However, all the institutions have been mobilized."

In one of the city's cemeteries, relief workers were digging and a bulldozer was excavating a mass grave. More than 200 corpses were already lying in the mass grave. A cleric and 18 relatives were saying prayers over an individual grave.

Apocalypse

"This is the Apocalypse. There is nothing but destruction and debris," Mohammad Rachai, in his 20s, said Friday when he brought the bodies of his wife and 4-year-old daughter to the cemetery.

"Last night before she went to sleep, she made me a drawing and kissed me four times," he said of his daughter. Rachai's whole family he held in his arms. "When I asked, 'Why four kisses?' she said, 'Maybe I won't see you again, Papa.'" Rachai told an AP photographer as tears streamed down his face.

With hospitals in the area destroyed, military transport planes had to evacuate many of the wounded to the provincial capitals, Kerman, and west to Yazd, Agence France-Presse reported.

Aid to Iran's C-130s had arrived on the injured so far, Interior Minister Abdolvahed Mousavi Lari told Iranian television.

The quake struck at 5:26 a.m. (0126 GMT), while many were asleep. The Iranian news agency put the magnitude at 6.3; the US Geological Survey measured it at 6.5. Intensity was recorded throughout the day by aftershocks, including one that registered a magnitude of 5.4, according to the geophysics institute of Tehran University.

The tremor became and 70 percent of Bam's residential areas had been destroyed. There was no electricity, water or telephone service.

Iran's Red Crescent, the Islamic equivalent of the Red Cross, said it was too and relief teams had been sent to Bam from a numerous provinces.

"Our immediate two priorities are dealing with the people who are trapped and transferring the wounded to other areas," Lari said from former province. "Our biggest difficulty so far is rescuing people because there is no electricity and people are doing what they can with flashlights," he said.

The US Senior Management Team in Tehran was sending 36 to 40 one of relief items such as tents, blankets, kitchen sets, water purification units, high-energy biscuits and women kits, said Madeleine Mukeba-Birnbaum, a UN official in Geneva.

Iranian television showed entire neighborhoods collapsed. On one screen, only a wall and the front were standing. People can find away the injured, while others are sobbing next to the flattened covered corpses of their loved ones. One room held his head in his hands and sobbed.

The quake's epicenter was outside Bam, and nearby villages were also damaged in the region, which is home to about 250,000 people and lies about 1,000 km southeast of the capital, Tehran.

In Bam, quakes of more than Magnitude 5 usually kill people because most buildings are not built to withstand earthquakes, although the country sits on several major fault lines. Iran has a history of earthquakes that kill thousands of people, including one of Magnitude 7.3 that killed almost 50,000 people in northwest Iran in 1990.

Historic section

Bam, the governor said the historic section of Bam, which was unoccupied, was 40 percent destroyed in the quake.

The United Nations cultural agency, Unesco, talked first for permission to send a team of experts to the historic, which has been under consideration for the agency's list of protected World heritage sites.

"The site of Bam is considered one of the very, very important sites of mud brick architecture," said Mounir Bouchenaki, a Unesco heritage specialist.

Parts of the Old City—once an important stop on the Silk Road through Asia—date back 2,000 years, others to the 11th or 12th centuries.

Khatami declared three days of mourning. "God willing, we will try even harder to limit your losses," he said in a phone call to Kerman's governor that was aired on television.

Elevated Iranians mobilized to help. In Tehran, volunteers jammed a blood donation center. In Yazd province, neighboring Kerman, the governor asked for donations of blankets and food and for volunteers to head to Bam to help in relief work. AP

Evacuation ordered as 'Zigzag' nears

From page A1

National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC) on Wednesday.

Zero-casualty count

The President said she had issued the instructions but would roll up each local government executive to ensure a "zero-casualty count."

After following a westerly path on Friday, Zigzag "changed course to the southwest direction and is now moving toward the Samar-Leyte area," the weather bureau said.

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration advised residents to keep away from and near mountain slopes to be "on alert against possible flashfloods and landslides."

Pagasa also requested its weather coverage, Signal No. 1, which was already in effect over Bicol and Eastern Visayas on Friday, was also declared over Central Visayas and the Aklan province last night.

Zigzag packs torrential winds of up to 55 kph, strong enough to peel the roofs off sign boards, break branches of small trees, or send banana plants or their stalk or the on the ground, according to the weather bureau.

Its center was located 60 km eastsoutheast of Borongan, Samar, as of 4 p.m. and was moving southeast at 11 kph.

Zigzag was forecast to be 50 km southwest of Masbate City in Southern Luzon this afternoon, over Bohol Tonight, and 120 km southwest of Dumaguete City tomorrow afternoon.

"The important thing is it (last night). That's why we have to start the evacuation now," Ms Macapagal said.

Command center

She said the model set up and personally directed a command center at the presidential guesthouse to monitor the weather and to coordinate efforts to delay the path of the typhoon. She directed the NDCC to preposition food and medicine in areas expected to be isolated by the typhoon.

"Right now, what's important for me is to make the command center to make sure that every (local executive) is doing what he is supposed to do. But they generally know what to do," she said.

Ms Macapagal said the Office of Civil Defense (OCD) has already issued nine-item bond by awarded food items. "Zigzag is going in the same direction (southern Luzon) as we are retracting it as a new storm and are coming by base to double time to prepare," she said.

She could not say how many people would have to be evacuated, saying she was waiting for the Bureau of Mines to report to her the specific areas.

Government officials scrambled to relay the President's order to residents.

"Right now, we're calling chief executives in these areas to tell them people living near 18-degree slopes and up to call and move to evacuate. We're calling everyone to leave to greater ground," said Defense Secretary Edwardo Ermita, chair of the NDCC.

As of 5 p.m. yesterday, some 250 families or 1,250 people remained in two evacuation centers in Southern Leyte, according to the NDCC.

At least 200 families or 1,000 people remained in evacuation centers in Agusan del Norte; 120 families or 717 people in Agusan del Sur; and 300 families or 1,500 people in Surigao del Norte.

Thousands stranded

Over 6,000 passengers found for the Visayas and Mindanao and two inland provinces of Bicol were stranded as of 12 p.m. yesterday in different ports of the region.

The Office of Civil Defense (OCD) regional office, in its 24-hour monitoring of Zigzag, said the five main ports of Bicol had been closed for sea travelers. Three are the ports of Pilar (Sorsogon), Tabaco (Albay), Pina (Catanduanes), Masbate (Masbate) and Matnog (Sorsogon).

"In Matnog alone, a total of 4,048 passengers were left stranded, and it will take at least a day or two before the (ports) ban can be lifted," Arnel Copil, OCD regional director, said.

In Pilar, 845 passengers were stranded; Tabaco, 700; Masbate, 200; and Virac, 60.

Last night, the vessel ban was lifted in Virac as Zigzag was expected to be at 110 km southeast of Borongan, Eastern Samar.

Almost 1,200 passengers bound for Metro Manila were stranded at the base ferry terminal in Allen, Northern Samar.

Adriano Fargas, OCD director for Eastern Visayas, said the passengers were provided food by the municipal government while waiting for the Coast Guard to allow them to return to Matnog en route to Metro Manila.

The passengers were on board 40 buses and 22 light vehicles, he added.

Fargas said he had advised residents living along the coastal areas and in low-lying areas to temporarily vacate their homes. With reports from CJ Bargania in Manila; Gil Arsenio Alvarado, PIA Southern Luzon Bureau, and Joey A. Gabieta PDI Visayas Bureau

Bonus: Great divide in government service

From page A1

ment employees in the executive branch started getting an additional cash gift of P5,000 last Monday. The extra Christmas bonus, which was authorized by President Macapagal Arroyo, is on top of the annually mandated P5,000 cash gift.

In all, each government employee is to receive a cash gift of P10,000 this year. But other government employees, specifically, from the legislative and judicial branches, get bigger additional cash gifts.

IMPEACH DAVIDE campaigners also joined in by court employees demanding bigger pay. RAFAEL ALUNAN III

Court employees

Among them are court employees who currently make sense when they arose and handle to demand higher pay just as Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr. faced an unprecedented impeachment.

Under Memorandum Order No. 54-2001 issued by Davide on Dec. 9, the justices and personnel of the Supreme Court are to receive P20,000 in Christmas cash gift. The judges and personnel of the lower courts, including the Shariah District Courts and the Shariah Circuit Courts, are to receive an additional cash gift of only P6,000.

The money was on top of the emergency economic assistance given to all employees of the Supreme Court and the lower courts, amounting to P5,000 or half-month basic salary, whichever is higher. The money was given to them in November days after the House of Representatives decided against recommending to the Senate the impeachment complaint against Davide.

Also early this month, court employees received their 13th Judicial Development Fund allowance ranging from P9,158 to P9,166 (This brings the total amount that each court employee received from the JDF for 2001 to between P21,150 to P21,900).

Employees of both houses of Congress have always gotten more than their counterparts in the Executive and Judicial branches.

Each employee in the House of Representatives has received a P12,000 bonus from Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr.

P50,000 in MWSS

Senate employees, on the other hand, have received their 'ayu allowance of P15,000. They expect its twelve before the year ends as usual, which includes P8,000 as poverty alleviation and P3,000 in additional food subsidy.

Also reported to have gotten a much bigger cash bonus are employees of the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System. Each employee reportedly received P50,000.

All employees from Manila Water Corp., who operated this huge bonanza to the business, said that "even as non-performing shareholders were given each shareholder bonus at a time when the government is supposed to be having problems with budget deficit."

It is fair and legal for some government employees to have more than others?

"There is nothing illegal in that," budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin told the Inquirer when asked if it was possible to have different cash gifts.

"When it comes to money the powers are the same for the three branches of government, Boncodin said.

The three branches all have the same legal basis for granting additional cash gifts and allowances. This is the power to augment any item in the General Appropriations law granted to the President of the Philippines, the Senate President, the Speaker, the Chief Justice, and the heads of constitutional bodies, such as the Commission on Elections, Civil Service Commission and the Commission on Audit.

This power is the only exception to the 1987 constitutional provision that bans any law authorizing any transfer of appropriations, according to Boncodin. The exception is

however though may differ as they are charged against savings from appropriations and subject to the availability of funds. Hence, the differing cash gifts.

In the executive branch, the additional cash gift was the same for all employees whether they work at the national government line agencies, government-controlled corporations, government financial institutions, or local government units and whether they are elected officials or appointed personnel, according to Boncodin.

4-month service

The same requirement is for employees to have rendered at least four months of service from Jan. 1, 2001 to Oct. 31, 20001 and to be still in the service as of Dec. 31, 2001.

An employee of a Quezon City Regional Trial Court has complained to the Inquirer about the big discrepancy between the P20,000 in additional cash gift to Supreme Court employees and the 10,000 that lower court employees received.

Cleo Guerra of the Supreme Court's Public Information Office said the difference was due to the different budgets and different savings of the courts.

The Supreme Court has higher savings and fewer employees. Hence, with a bigger pie and fewer to partake of, the employees' share is much bigger than those from the lower courts which have smaller savings but more employees.

Is there a way to rationalize allowances? Boncodin said the power to augment is reciprocal. The executive branch can not tell the Supreme Court and Congress how to distribute gifts and allowances from their savings.

She said that though that having differing cash gifts could be a problem as this would discourage those who receive less.

This is why the Macapagal administration has rationalized the giving of allowances in the executive branch. Results said this was made possible by enacting laws to forbid all government agencies and distributing the national savings equally to all employees of agencies and units who get their funding from the Department of Budget and Management.

This is why starting 2001, teachers and employees of the local government units and state universities have started to receive the same cash gifts given to their counterparts in the national government line agencies, before this, they received cash gifts only if their unit or agency had generated savings, according to Boncodin.

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The WORLD

Lito Lorenzo B. Dano

7 dead; 9 missing in California mudslides

SAN BERNARDINO, California—Searchers slogging through waist-high muck found seven people dead and looked for at least nine others missing after mudslides engulfed two camps in the San Bernardino Mountains in a terrifying torrent of soil, boulders and trees Friday.

The mudslides were set off on Christmas Day after a downpour fell on hillsides that had been stripped of vegetation by wildfires in October and November. With nothing to hold the soil in place, trees and rocks went tumbling down the hillsides, along with the flash floods around.

"I thought I was going to die," said Brian Delaney, 19, who was trapped up to his neck before rescuers pulled him out of the mud that washed into the recreation center at a trailer-home encampment in Devore.

Two bodies were found on Friday near the trailer camp, San Bernardino County authorities said. One was identified by county authorities as Janice Arlene Brandberg, 60, Riverside said she was the camp's assistant manager.

Six other bodies were missing in Devore, but 32 readers were accounted for.

Five bodies were found below a Greek Orthodox retreat, the Saint Sophia Camp. Twenty-seven people were believed to have been spending Christmas Day with the camp's caretaker when the wall of mud swept away two buildings on one side of the camp. Fourteen of the people were rescued on Christmas Day.

Finding people caught in the landslides was time-consuming because rescuers could have been washed far down the canyon, county sheriff's spokesperson Chip Peterson said. AP

China reports suspected SARS case

CHINESE emergency workers cheer after they successfully capped a ruptured gas well in Kaixian County

BEIJING—China on Saturday announced its first suspected SARS case since July—a 32-year-old freelance television station employee who is said was hospitalized in the southern city of Guangzhou.

The man checked into a hospital Dec. 20 with a headache and fever, the official Xinhua News Agency said. It said the man was transferred Wednesday to a quarantine ward and declared a suspected case of severe acute respiratory syndrome on Friday.

Guangzhou is the capital of Guangdong province, where the world's first known SARS case was recorded in November 2002.

The World Health Organization and health authorities in Hong Kong, which borders Guangdong, and China announced three on Friday of the suspected case. Hong Kong said it had tightened screening of travelers coming to the border from Guangdong.

The new patient was being treated at the No. 8 People's Hospital in Guangzhou, Xinhua said.

China reported 349 deaths out of a total of 5,327 cases in mainland in the SARS outbreak, and more than 5,000 people were infected.

Earlier this month, neighboring Taiwan announced that a 44-year-old military assistant who worked with the virus had become its first SARS case in two months.

Taiwanese health authorities said Friday that they had taken the assistant's wife and father off an observation list after they showed no symptoms.

In the height of the scare, around of 300 people in Taiwan and 75 in Singapore were under home quarantine. The remainder attended a conference in Singapore before falling ill.

Beijing said in July that the mainland's first 12 patients had been discharged free of the disease.

The WHO has been warning of a possible resurgence of the disease in the flu season, and appointed two foreign aid to help China improve its disease warning system and research. AP

Chinese gas well sealed after disaster

CHONGQING, China—Government rescue crews capped a ruptured gas well with tons of sealant on Saturday, putting an end to more than a week of fear that killed at least 198 people and forced 41,000 to flee a remote, mountainous area in southwest China, the official Xinhua News Agency reported.

The disaster was China's worst recent industrial accident, hurling a 23-sq.-km "death zone" across with bodies of adults and children, some unwanted as they lived to escape.

On Saturday, emergency crews began pouring hundreds of cubic meters of sealant down the well, which had spewed fumes for four days, Xinhua said. Minutes later, it was a "definite announcing, "Cap operation is completed successfully."

The government ruined the oil field and deadly well by arson in 1998, but didn't say when or how the additional deaths occurred.

The disaster began Tuesday night when a poisonous mix of natural gas and hydrogen sulfide escaped from the well, which is reportedly was broken open by a drilling accident.

Some 9,103 people were rescued by gas poisoning and other injuries, and 933 were still hospitalized—17 in critical conditions, the government said Friday. Newspaper photos showed children with red faces and their eyes swollen shut from chemical burns.

Officials said earlier the well would be plugged with cement, but Xinhua on Saturday called the sealant used. It wasn't clear whether that means dirt and rock or one of the chemical mixes called mud that are used in oil and gas drilling.

There didn't appear to be any danger of a new blowout, Xinhua said, citing an industry expert.

No details were released of how the sealing of the well was carried out, but earlier reports and television crews using satellite-linking vehicles and newspaper photos showed them wearing respirators and using hand-to-ear protective suits.

Light rain has been on over the scene three days should help to dissipate or of toxins, Xinhua said.

However, there was no immediate indication when evacuees living in schools and government buildings would be allowed to go home.

Inclement weather hit the province of Sichuan on Wednesday, sending huge flames shooting into the sky in an effort to burn off the fumes and have plans to re-open drilling.

People in poorer towns were sending truckloads of donated food and clothing for evacuees, local officials and news reports said Saturday.

Evacuees included 20,000 acres of bedding, tons of rice, thousands of cases of noodles, more than 10,000 sets of clothing and 1,400 pairs of shoes, the newspaper Chongqing Economic Times reported. AP

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WorldBriefs

4 US soldiers die

BAGHDAD—Rebels disrupted three Americans in bombs in separate incidents Saturday that killed four soldiers and injured six people in the occupied capital, the military said. On Friday, four US soldiers were killed in bomb blasts and a mortar attack and another died in a traffic accident, bringing the death toll for US troops to Iraq this week to 11. The elevated attacks have prompted Washington to consider enlisting more troops despite the opposition of Saddam Hussein. AP

Threat to Vatican

ROME—Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi said Saturday that Osama bin Laden is "beginning to lose his fear" of Italian intelligence and police and has become the Vatican. He made the statement on Christmas Eve that he had received "genuine and very certified news" of an attack on Rome on Christmas Day. "A hijacked plane above the Vatican... An attack from the sky. The threat from terrorism is extremely high at this moment. I've spent today (Dec. 24) at Palazzo Chigi about with the situation," Berlusconi said. "Since I'm under it continuously... I don't say this out of whatever but because I am aware that our defenses are very high. Whatever what they have organized, they won't make it." Reuters

Cow parts recalled

PORTLAND, Oregon—Cow parts—including hooves, bones, fat and brains—are used in everything from baked cream and sunblock, to meat by meat and gardening aids. In the most tangled drama of the mad cow scare, Washington federal inspectors are concentrating on slaughterhouses from the tainted animal, which might have gone to a beef-dicers distributors in the Northwest, said Dan Hilditch, spokesperson for the Oregon Department of Agriculture. Since it is from secondary parts—the raw material for soil, soaps, vaccines—that are being recalled. AP

Summit to go on

ISLAMABAD—All South Asian countries worked to a summit in Islamabad in early January have confirmed they will attend, despite security fears after two more bombings targeting Pakistan's president in a nearby city, army official said Saturday. "Seven countries, including foreign ministers or Pakistan's counterparts, are due to join the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation summit in the capital on Jan. 4-6, which will discuss a proposed free trade agreement and other issues," he said. On Thursday, three countries attended President Pervez Musharraf's motorcade as he traveled through Rawalpindi, about 15 km from Islamabad. Fifteen people were killed, but the president was unhurt. It happened just a few hundred meters from another bombing in January of Musharraf on Dec. 14. At least one of the three men involved in Thursday's attack was a foreigner, officials have said, citing statements in the hospital. AP

Still no signal

LONDON—Space scientists said they had failed to make contact with the six-legged British Beagle 2 Mars lander that would confirm it had arrived safely on the Red Planet. A third attempt by Nasa's orbiting Mars Odyssey at about 08:15 GMT Saturday made no contact with the Beagle 2 which was due to land on Christmas Day. Another attempt at GMT Thursday. Britain's Jodrell Bank Observatory, which has twice scanned the Martian surface with its huge radio telescope, has also failed to detect a signal from the tiny lander—which was sent to Mars to search for signs of life. AP

Tank accident

JERUSALEM—An army tank rammed a public minibus on Nahanson's Jaffa Road on Saturday, killing 18 people and injuring at least 8 others, authorities said. The driver was unharmed. Israeli military examiners near the town of Magidiya, central Jaffa, when it hit the minibus and collected four of it, said police Lt. Hila Wilkinson. The tank driver had control of the vehicle shortly after the accident, which took place on a narrow and winding road, witnesses said. AP

1st great-grandson

BEIJING—Nearly three decades after his death, Mao Zedong has a new title: great-grandfather. The first great-grandson of China's communist founder was born this week on Dec. 17 (8th anniversary of Mao's birth, a newspaper reported Saturday. The son of Mao Xinyu, Mao's grandchild, was born to Liu Jing, a former actress, and Deng Zhifang, the only child of Deng Xiaoping, who died in 1997. Deng, born on Aug. 20, 1983, led China from the 1949 revolution until his death in 1976. AP

Warehouse explosion

VIENTIANE, Vietnam—An accidental explosion went off inside a warehouse in a city near the Vietnam capital Saturday, shooting debris and killing at least five people, officials said. Workers were unloading fireworks from a truck when they ignited the warehouse in a crowded commercial area of Vientiane's near the Island equipment, police said. AP

Man in morgue

HANOI—An elderly Vietnamese man who was buried after four months ago after spending seven hours inside a drawer at a morgue has made that this time, state-controlled media reported Saturday. Nguyen Van Quan, 73, died Wednesday following a long illness at Nguyen Tri Phuong Hospital in Ho Chi Minh City, more than four months after his daughter and son-in-law discovered him alive in his room. They came to take him home for his funeral. He was then released "Vietnam Net said. AP

Across the NATION
Assistant Editor Tony Bergonia

PDI correspondent gets death threats over 'jueteng' stories

RAGUD CITY—The threats came through a mysterious phone call on Christmas Day. Carmen Bellosured caution Saturday as a funeral wreath was delivered to the house of Inquirer Benito Pimentel, the Inquirer's Pangasinan correspondent.

Pimentel said the wreath would have been the result of her reports on jueteng operations in Pangasinan.

He said she was shocked when she found a funeral wreath at her gate on Saturday, a day after her husband received an unidentified caller's message that "if you are a journalist, you better stop your reporting."

Pimentel said she immediately called up Supt. Mario Sandoval, Pangasinan police director, to report the threats and seek assistance.

Sandoval then ordered Supt. Silmido Magno of the provincial police's special operations group and his men to go to Pimentel house in Urdaneta town to investigate.

Magno assigned a security aide to Pimentel following the threat.

Pimentel said he received the text message from the same man last Thursday, a day after he reported on jueteng operations in the province. Pimentel said the caller, a man who refused to identify himself, told her that she would not live to see New Year for supposedly disrupting the flow of money people.

Pimentel said she

Deadly chemical peddled as shabu, warns PNP exec

CABUYAO, Laguna—The government's anti-drug czar last week warned drug users in the country that pushers are selling a deadly chemical substance and passing this off as shabu.

Deputy Executive Secretary Edgardo Aglipay said the anti-drug campaigned banned drug dealers now selling ephedrine.

Aglipay, chief of the Anti-Illegal Drugs Special Operations Task Force (ADSOTF), said ephedrine is being sold at almost the same price as shabu in Metro Manila.

He said the chemical, used as a precursor ingredient in making shabu, is twice as strong as shabu and is far more dangerous.

The anti-drug czar said he first heard of these reports after the initial results of their operations led to the dismantling of several illegal drug laboratories in the country.

He said the reports were present one only after they seized 14 kilos of ephedrine packed as shabu in a raid in Sitio Manila Lee week.

Aglipay was here to greet officials in a consultative meeting of local government and police officials of Laguna in behalf of the town's municipal hall.

"Definitely, the illegal operations of drug syndicates in the country were badly affected by our anti-drug campaigns. We have already dismantled 15-20 illicit clandestine laboratories in only six months. And they know that we're on the lookout for others," Aglipay said.

"Those (operations) pushed them to sell ephedrine as shabu without the users' knowledge... They are smearing these drug addicts into using a very dangerous chemical," he added.

Aglipay said that because of its crystal like appearance, "only buyers on the drugs trade could possibly differentiate ephedrine from shabu."

He said ephedrine is usually packed in barrels when being moved in drug syndicates' warehouses.

Bad effect

Aglipay said the effect of ephedrine is more severe than shabu. He said using this chemical could make a person insane in a few hours.

"Drug makers normally mix liquid chemicals to lower down the effect of this chemical. Imagine using ephedrine in its purest form. This is very hazardous to any individual," he explained.

But Aglipay reiterated that these chemicals were not locally produced but were smuggled into the country in powder form from India and China by big and influential drug syndicates.

He said that although they had already neutralized seven of the conspiracy into biggest crime groups involved in illegal drugs, remnants of these groups are continuing smuggling activities on their own.

"They were able to bring ephedrine into the country illegally. They have stored these chemicals to their labs as the main ingredient in manufacturing shabu," he said.

In the six months of the anti-drug campaign, Aglipay said police have already seized shabu and ephedrine worth more than P13 billion.

Police have arrested over 11,000 drug suspects during this period, he added.

Diet pills

The US Food and Drug Administration lists ephedrine as a primary ingredient in diet pills because of its effectiveness in weight loss. It is also used as a common ingredient for energy-boosting food supplements used by athletes and medicines for asthma.

Derived from shrubs like plants called ephedra, ephedrine is also known as ma huang, squaw tea, mormon tea or ephedrine. The plant is abundant in central Asia and is used in ancient medicinal preparations.

A website of a group of lawyers helping alleged victims of ephedrine said the substance is suspected to have caused over 800 deaths in the United States since 1994.

The group said ephedrine causes heart attack and stroke.

"These serious adverse effects include hypertension (elevated blood pressure), psychosis (rapid heart rate), cerebrallally (nerve damage), myopathy (muscle injury), psychosis, stroke, memory loss, heart rate irregularities, insomnia, nervousness, tremors, seizures, heart attacks and death," the group said in their website.

The group added that the FDA "has proposed to prohibit the marketing of dietary supplements containing it ephedrine in view of ephedrine-associated serious events."

In February this year, investigators and ephedrine was the culprit in the sudden death of baseball pitcher Steve Bechler of the Baltimore Orioles who suffered a heat stroke less than 24 hours after taking ferasthine, an over-the-counter drug that contains ephedrine or ephedrine.

Successes

"In a short time, we have knocked out the operations of 143 local drug groups. What were 14,000 cases and cleared were 3,500 hangovers. Imagine how much more we could do if we are able to contain these operations," Aglipay said.

But he said the police success does not for on statistics alone.

He said they have been getting "feedbacks" from different sectors how their campaign reduced the number of crimes that resulted from drug addiction.

"The year six months has indeed been a very beautiful harvest for (us). Marlon Ramos, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

MERCY MISSION
A beggar in near Baguio City's biting cold and rests patiently for alms on a pathway leading to the Baguio Cathedral. Beggars are a common sight in Baguio City and their number appears to double during the holidays.

ROUNDUP

Rape suspect nabbed

CAMP DAVID CRAME, Bataan—A suspected rapist who was said to have preyed on two children was nabbed by police in this province, officials said.

Its policemen after a year of surveillance. Rolland Padilla, 27, was arrested in his house in Barangay San Vicente, Bagac City Supt. Francisco Manalo Jr., Bagac police director, said three alleged victims of Padilla, all minors, were rescued.

Manalo said Padilla had raided the girls to hide his guilty threats and intimidation. Padilla, according to reports, would promise the girls P100 and later rape them. Frank Cimatu, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

3 killed in collision

QUEZON, Zon—Two couples were killed when the wooden they were riding in was hit by a bus along the national highway here on Dec. 27. Police identified the victims as Jerry Nabual, 21, and Eric Nabual, 14. The victims were on their way to Sumulong when a northbound Autobus Bus Mallows in the barangay Bulog-Matanda at around 4 p.m. Police said the Mallows bus, owned by the bus' lone, resulting in the collision. The victims, reports said, were thrown off their wooden and were killed instantly. The bus driver, Rizal Magbalon, surrendered to the police. Lamberto Bulbin Jr., PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

Confusion in pier

SAMAR, Samar—The commotion at the Batangas Port (Northwest Terminal (SPI 1)), which started on November 30, has not stopped as passengers who have a hard time getting into the passenger terminal as the former parking space and gate have been closed. As for them, officials in charge of the passenger terminal could not identify or recommend the contractor to put up signs on the matter and the said public. But even as she stressed that the port operation has been going on smoothly without a hitch, some passengers complained about the inconvenience they have to face. Rio Magistrat, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Chicken prices up

DAVAO, Davao—While the price of pork was reported at P170 per kilo on the new market here, the price of chicken has also gone up by P10 per kilo before Christmas. Retailers said the rise in prices was due to the scarcity of chicken. "We have to buy live chicken from as far as Lias City because we don't have suppliers here anymore," a vendor in the new market said. Rio Magistrat, PDI South-eastern Mindanao Bureau

Australia OKs P600 million in aid for Misamis Occidental

OROQUIETA, CITY—The Australian government has approved a P600 million fund for the second phase of a program aimed at strengthening the capability of town governments in Misamis Occidental to manage community development efforts.

The first phase of the Philippines-Australia Local Sustainability Program (PALS), which was implemented over a five-year period would end this year and has covered at least six towns.

For the second phase, at least eight towns would receive funds for community development, strengthening of their local government units, and the establishment of a program development facility (PDF) that funds livelihood and other community-level development initiatives.

Lindsay Chan, the Australian team leader of PALS, said the successful implementation of the program's first phase was key to the decision of the Australian government to roll out the second phase, which is expected to start by February next year.

Chan said the program's first phase helped local governments improve their economies through new capital livelihood projects.

A main feature of the assistance package is the allocation of P1 million for every barangay to finance livelihood ventures of communities.

Chan said the funds are released directly to project beneficiaries, avoiding the traditional bureaucratic route that is usually the cause of delays in projects. Ryan D. Ramirez, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Cops manning anti-kidnap 'chokepoints' warned vs abuses

HEAVY-tired Bagnio Bayou supervises a chokepoint along the South Luzon Expressway amid efforts to stop kidnapping syndicates and at the same time prevent a good image of law enforcement agencies.

CABANATUAN, Cambodia—A top official of the Central Luzon police has asked policemen in the region to "stick to the rules" and respect motorists as they start manning chokepoints in the region.

The instruction was made as anti-kidnapping czar Angelo Reyes ordered an investigation on reports that two policemen had extorted money from a driver of a 10-wheel truck at a chokepoint.

Reyes ordered SPO2 Celso Dizon and PO2 Lonito Manalaysay investigated for alleged extortion on Dec. 28.

"I will not allow these abusive policemen to break our stride in curbing criminality," said Reyes in a statement.

Reyes asked the public to report any abuses committed by policemen at chokepoints and call 727-8000, the National Intelligence Coordinating Agency hotline.

Chief Supt. Vidal Querol, regional police director, warned policemen under his command that he will not tolerate abuse.

President Macapagal-Arroyo ordered the establishment of chokepoints in Central Luzon and Southern Tagalog, the two regions hardest hit by kidnapping, after seeing that a police officer is protecting crime syndicates behind the anti-kidnapping and bank robberies in the metropolis.

Querol also ordered motorists to cooperate with policemen in enforcing security checks.

"Motorists should heed the same responsibility and must cooperate with the police at all times in order to prevent unnecessary provocations that could [create] problems," he said. Cesar Pillas, PDI Central Luzon Bureau

Kidnap suspect's kin express shock over arrest

By Joey A. Gabieta
PDI Visayas Bureau

ABEL, Leyte—The sister of the notorious Salonga, the alleged suspect in the kidnapping-killing of Coca-Cola executive Jose Ong, broke into a shock to his family.

His elder sister Josefina Ventura, 57, said they did not even know that Salonga, 27, whom they fondly call "Ging" was arrested by the police on Christmas Eve.

Her brother Lemuel, 56, decided to give a statement when the Bureau summoned her to their house in Villa Sto. on interior village about 8 km from the town proper.

"I have more important things to do," she said, adding that she was about to help a mother deliver a baby at that time. She identified herself as a farmer Tumaliwan (midwife)."

But Ventura said her younger brother was "innocent."

"My brother cannot do that horrible thing. He is a very good man. We do not believe it," she said.

She said they were shocked upon learning of the arrest of Salonga, the fifth among nine siblings.

Police arrest bandit leader

SIMBAL, SANTOS CITY—Members of the Simbal police force on Sunday arrested an alleged leader of a notorious armed group operating in the boundary of Batangas and Bulacan Provinces.

In a report reaching the Batangas police command, the suspect was identified as a certain Mike Alfonso alias Harno Leaden, leader of the dreaded Alfonso bandit group in the area.

Supt. Walter Dangpon, command police chief, said in a police that Alfonso was arrested by virtue of a warrant issued by a court in Mandaluyong where he is facing charges of murder, frustrated murder and illegal possession of firearms. He was also tagged as the mastermind in an ambush in Sabat-Kabasi two years ago where a policeman and a militiaman were killed. Agustin T. Dotsis, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Cops file murder case vs 3 in law student's slaying

By Chito A. Fuentes
PDI Visayas Bureau

DAGUMBAAN CITY—Police filed a murder complaint against three suspects in the killing of a freshman law student on Nov. 21.

The complaint was filed against Eugenio Sison alias Boboying, Jessel Gutierrez alias Dodong and Chris still unidentified.

Sol Campanio before the city prosecutor's office on Dec. 10.

The filing stemmed from the statements of witnesses who alleged that the three were involved in the killing of Jose Mel Jesha Segnon, 20, and a freshman law student at the Bohol Institute of Technology.

Segnon was killed in front of the University of Bohol along Sto. Cleto Street, causing serious distress to the peace and order situation in the city.

A lone gunman shot the victim in the neck at about 9:45 p.m., a few minutes after he alighted from a motorcycle at his way home.

The gunman casually took on a waiting yellow Kawasaki Aero motorcycle driven by his companion and with a third man.

In a sworn statement, one witness claimed that he had just passed by Gutierrez who was sitting on a motorcycle that was parked on the roadside when he heard a single gunshot.

When he looked at the direction of the gunshot, he saw a man fall to ground and another holding a pistol-like gun.

The witness said he did not know that the victim was Segnon but the man holding the gun was

Cops sue environment, local execs for logging

GENERAL SANTOS CITY — Police authorities in Sarangani province filed illegal logging and graft charges against officials and personnel of the Community Environment and Natural Resources Office (Cenro) covering the towns of Maasim, Kiamba and Maitum.

Supt. Willie Unigarao, Sarangani police director, said acts from Cenro officer Rod Dimino and DENR barangay Rubio do Pangyalin and Jerry Labay, police also sued forest rangers Zipaldo Duaso and Alfonso Cuaresma; Army Sgt. Ouido Ciella and Sagarral Joel Abe of Sarangay Lion before a local court in dialed town on Tuesday.

He said also included in the illegal logging charges were Francisco Garcia Jr., Nicanor Garcia, Valentino Peninsula, Judith Bio, Jessi Garcia, Fred Ayallano, Manny Eat and George Jumalo, chief of Zone Farmers Multi-Purpose Cooperative (Zifamcoop), a federation of a logging concession in the area.

Sarangani said police have decided in the the charges after the seizure of about 17,000 board feet of illegally cut lumber.

On Thursday evening last week, police recovered lumber with Bilet declang, Sarangani provincial environment and natural resources office, seized the lumber loaded in two 10-wheeler trucks along the national highway in Barangay Tinoto in Maasim.

The logs were being transported by the Zifamcoop, a holder of a Community-based Forest Management (CBFM) permit.

Environment Secretary Elisea Gozun had issued a suspension order in January on all forestry use permits (IUPs) of CBFM holders nationwide after receiving pressure complaints. Jaquilet P. Zosio, PDI Mindanao Bureau

THE BEST gift of the season for eagle conservationists emerges from its shell at the Philippine Eagle Foundation headquarters in Davao. The eaglet, 113 grams, was bred and hatched in captivity

Eagle breeders get best gift of the holidays

DAVAO CITY — Although it was born five days before Christmas, conservationists have regard the hatching of a 113-gram eaglet as one of the best gifts they got for the season.

The new eaglet, a product of natural pairing of eagles Jag and Sa Brazos, started to pip its shell inside the Philippine Eagle Foundation in Malagos, Baguio District on Thursday morning.

It completely broke out of its shell on Saturday, according to PEF officials.

Domingo Tadeza, director for conservation breeding, said an eaglet normally breaks out of its shell 24 hours after the first pip.

However, the still unnamed eaglet had a hard time because it was in abnormal position inside the egg.

Tadeza and three staffers decided to help the eaglet out of her 11-month life.

"It's a merry Christmas at the Philippine Eagle Foundation. We won't be getting much sleep with the newborn and a couple more eggs to take care of, but an addition to the dwindling number of Philippine Eagles is always joy," Dennis Salvador, PEF executive director, said after the bird's successful hatching.

The eaglet is the 14th eagle bred and hatched in captivity since 1992. The center now has 30 eagles, including those previously caught in the wild.

Like all previously hatched eagles, the newly hatched bird needs godparents, who would bear the billfor its feeds and other expenses.

The 1953-Adopt an Eagle Program aims to provide private individuals and companies the chance to become godparents of an eagle for P 100,000 per year for six years.

The center has been aiming to release the eagles back into the wild to help complement the declining eagle population.

The Philippine Eagle (Pithecophaga jefferyi), the world's bigger bird of prey, was declared an endangered species in 1995 and was named the country's national bird in 2002. Joselle Ruddick, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Gov accused of fund misuse; says raps part of 'dirty play'

CITY OF MALOLOS — A non-government watch group has accused Bulacan Gov. Josefina de la Cruz of misusing public funds when the road the province's special education fund as collected for a P124-million loan.

In a statement, the Movement for Responsible Enterprise (Mere) wanted De la Cruz that it will file technical malversation charges against her for using the SEF to secure a loan from the Land Bank of the Philippines.

De la Cruz, however, dismissed Mere's charges as "non-issues," saying these were part of a "dirty play" employed by her political opponents.

She said she does not want to dignify such accusations, which she called "black propaganda."

The Mere statement quoted Atty. Agaliano Pimentel Jr., the author of the Local Government Code of 1991, who said the use of the SEF as loan collateral was "subject to legal question."

Pimentel said education "is not a devolved function and thus remains in the hands of the central government."

Mere said LBP loan documents showed that the provincial government will use the P124-million loan for the construction of 82 two-story school buildings, with four classrooms per building.

It said the documents showed that De la Cruz assigned a third of the province's SEF of the province annually for seven years to service the loan.

The SEF, the group said, is collected in variable percentages by the local government units out of real property taxes paid in their areas.

The average SEF allocation is 1 percent, of the 2.5 percent normally charged by LGUs as real property tax. Cornelio Reyes, PDI Central Luzon Bred

INQUIRER

OPINION

Faith and politics

EDITORIAL

HOW do you solve a problem like Brother Eddie Villanueva? The spiritual leader's political plans must have cast a pall over the season's merrymaking in Mandaluyong. If Villanueva, the founder of the Jesus is Lord evangelical group, pushes through with his plan to run for the presidency, he could spoil President Macapagal-Arroyo's chances of winning a full term in May.

JE claims a membership of five million, but we doubt if even a simple majority of this total will vote for Villanueva. As powerful businessman Eduardo Cojuangco Jr. has learned twice in a dozen years, a kingmaker does not necessarily have the electoral support to become king. But in the close race that next year's presidential election looks set to be, a million JE members voting for Villanueva, instead of the President the movement has supported in the last three years, could spell disaster for her.

Like the Catholic charismatic group El Shaddai, the Jesus is Lord movement is a campaigner's dream. Its mass prayer assemblies bring hundreds of thousands of enthusiastic believers together regularly, even routinely.

But like El Shaddai too, its political clout is open to question. The perception that Brother Mike Velarde and the group he founded were responsible for Joseph Estrada's victory in 1998 persists, but in truth El Shaddai's devotees and Estrada voters formed two overlapping sets. Velarde, in other words, was preaching to the converted. In contrast (or as proof), El Shaddai's support for Francisco Tatad's vice presidential bid that same year landed Tatad, who did not have the sympathy of Estrada's supporters, exactly nowhere.

Villanueva has not figured in any of the surveys—not because he doesn't rate (to borrow a term from the TV industry) but because he had not been considered a prospective candidate. His declaration this month that he will contest the presidency may change all that. If he continues, it is likely that he will, like Ross Perot in the 1992 US presidential election and Ralph Nader in 2000, play a spoiler's role, siphoning off votes from the incumbent or the incumbent's choice. If he withdraws from the race, he would leave the President wounded, throwing her rivals exactly where she is vulnerable.

But it would be a disservice to Villanueva, and to the larger public interest, to consider his bid only for its impact on Ms Macapagal's chances. His candidacy must be understood on its own merits, and as an expression of a venerable political tradition.

Villanueva is running on a platform of change and recovery (in themselves, the planks in his platform are already inconsistent—awkwardly). "What we need is the change and transformation of our nation. I've been traveling for 20 years and I've seen how our country became quite pitiful," he told reporters. He blamed "traditional politics" in part for the state of the nation, and summarized his reason for running thus: "The restoration of morality in government and the country."

Talk of morality in government will set some people's teeth on edge; some of them will find it hopelessly naive, while others will bristle as yet another attempt to blur the line between church and state. But with the exception of Estrada, who knows there are limits to the roles an actor can play all our presidents, even the dictator Ferdinand Marcos through his lies, Nikko dewatcher of a First Lady Jaye played the morality card. The difference—more real than apparent, we trust—is that Villanueva is the leader of a genuine spiritual movement.

And the notion that affairs of state will be turned into a subset of religion is based on a misunderstanding of the doctrine. It prevents the establishment of a state religion and respects the individual freedom to worship one's own God; it does not disqualify a candidate merely because he happens to be a believer. As Blanco learned too late, the moral covers more ground than the political.

This much is clear: Villanueva's candidacy belongs to the tradition of faith-based politics, a commitment to social action nourished on spiritual sources. Others have gone before him. Raul Manglapus being the most prominent. Whether he succeeds in May or not, others will follow.

Innocents' Day

SEPARATE OPINION

Augusto A. Cruz

TODAY is Innocents' Day commemorating the day not more than 2,000 years ago when King Herod ordered the slaughter of male babies in his realm for fear of the prophesy that one of them would depose him from his throne. The new born Jesus escaped that cruel decree because Joseph and Mary had taken him to Egypt, outside of the despot's power, in obedience to the bidding of an angel.

That story has not much of its spiritual value in this modern world, probably because we have become more practical, if not, cynical, subtly less reverent. In fact, the day is now regarded as an occasion for practical jokes as by simply appending "April" after the date you are ready to accept things at face value without suspicion of deception or mischief.

The moral trick is for the player to approach a close friend with a tale of woe, like being short of funds to discharge an urgent obligation. Complying with the farmographic duty is practically a matter of life and death, and so he is asking his friend to help him with his desperate need. Should he soon time with a loan that will be paid within a week? The size of the loan will depend upon the finances of the victim or the confidence of the prankster.

Where the unsuspecting target, out of sympathy for the pleader, delivers the requested amount, then will the gullible victim usually in the presence of others in on the trick, who will burst into peals, point him that he has been duped on Innocents' Day surprised for a minute or so, the victim will accept the joke good naturedly and share like a good sport in the spirit of good clean fun.

The issue will, of course, be confirmed because the victim was too trusting like the innocent babies who were massacred by record. The names will usually be spare for a those not for the gang, with the price as forgotten years, who will remember his experience as the unfortunate in play the role of the devil or whom "innocents" They remain around next year.

The peculiarity of the day has made many of us forget the name of us are innocents throughout the year and not as victims of a mere prank among well-meaning friends. Most of the time, the deception is without, and in are the consequences. We are victimized by ill-intentioned persons who take advantage of our naiveté for their own selfish advantage. This is usually committed by those in power, from those occupying high offices to the policeman on the beat and even the servants.

Thus, executive orders into public contracts without bidding for a certain percentage of the cut for their private fortunes, legislators from Congress to the local sanggunian pass laws for commissions and grant franchises for sale in exchange backdoorsides, the judiciary gets in on the act with corrupt judges absolving criminals and favoring having justice for under-the-table considerations; tax collectors look the other ways to exempt crooked taxpayers for an agreed fee; even cops and servants collect their daily mug from jaywalkers and traffic violators before they release them.

Hell HOW is told about too high school classmates who bumped into each other during the holidays after the latter mistreated him here-you-how's, they started calling about their lives and their families, particularly about their husbands. With envious, the first one said that her husband "ay sumabihing bahay na" (went to the bar) the second one, with more sadness, said that her husband "ay sumabihing bahay na" (went to the love house already)?

* * *

Today is the Feast of the Holy Family. The Gospel today (Lk. 2:41-52) speaks about the love of Jesus and Mary and Joseph for each other. The Gospel also speaks about a basic ingredient needed by every family: respect for one another. Without respect, there will be no true love in the family. If you do not love each other, do you at least respect one another in your family? There are parents who think they own their children. In the name of love, they even run their children's lives.

Parents, Jesus reminds you today that your children are God's more than they are yours, and that God loves them more than you can love them. If your children can't find a place in the sun, maybe it's because they keep sitting in the shade of your family tree.

* * *

Last November, an elderly woman came to my office with much sadness. She had been "abandoned" by her only daughter. She had no place to go, and she had no one in this world. Something, through the help of friends, an overwhile to put her in a room where she could stay, at least, for the meantime. It was such a sad and painful story, and I thought that was that.

But on Dec. 24, her "prodigal daughter" came over to tell her the good news that she and her mother had been reunited. She had asked for forgiveness and she promised that she would never again leave her aging mother. She left because she needed to have space from

Family matters

MOMENTS

Fr. Jerry M. Orbos, SVD

her domineering and competitive mom (mother is not a painful phrase for both of them). So now, they are together again, with their memory healed, more resolved to stick it out with one another. It was a beautiful Christmas moment.

* * *

On a personal note, my family had a beautiful Christmas moment when we celebrated the Nardo Sarna with all of us present. For the past four years, our youngest sister, Bing, a businesswoman, had to stay put in the United States till she got her permanent card. Mama stayed as all as proxy that Bing would be home for Christmas this year. Her faith was unwavering. She was confident that our prayers would be answered. She told us, as the other did in the past, to pray to our departed relatives for their intercession. Guess what? Bing received her notice of interview on June 23, the death anniversary of our Papa, and she was given the green card on Dec. 18, the birthday of Papa. Prayers works. Family matters!

* * *

Again we affirm: "The family that prays together, stays together." There is no such thing as a perfect family or a perfect relationship, but if God is present, somehow the ties are never broken. The ties may be weakened, but never severed. So, we all were invited to God and to one another. Nobody got it honorably. If you don't want your family to alive, you must go back to your family alive.

* * *

There is a lot of relatedness and grace in having abortion as one's parents. Even Jesus was obedient to Joseph and Mary. Those who disobey and make their parents sad, leave a lot of burdens in their lives. That's because of the Fourth Commandment: to honor one's parents carries with it a promise, a blessing in this life. It is never too late to make our parents happy, whether they are already gone, or are still alive. Our greatest gift to them is that we are close to God, closer to one another, and that, even when they are already gone, we will be okay, we will continue to love one another. Then they will have, indeed, left behind good assets in this world in us, their children.

* * *

Wish you had more and had received more, especially at Christmas? Learn from the star message about a little boy who was asked if he got all he wanted this Christmas. His response was, "No, but then, it is the birthday, not Christ, right?"

Right! When will you stop wishing to have more? When will you stop receiving and start giving?

* * *

We are one human family with God as our Father. For those who think they are better than others because of their skin color, race, creed or culture, listen to this message of a black man from Texas: "When I born, I black. When I grow up, I black. When I sick, I black. And when I die, I black. But white folks, when you born, you pink. When you grow up, you white. When you go to sun, you red. When you scared, you yellow. When you sick, you green. When you bruised, you purple. And when you die, you gray. So who you calling colored?"

May the new year be a better year for all of us, in all aspects, in Your name. Amen.

* * *

A document with the Lord:
Lord, remind me that family matters do matter. Jesus.

Counting your blessings

REVEILLE

Ramon J. Farolan

TODAY we shall refrain from recounting politics or politicians. There is just too much of both in the newspapers, radio and television. What we need is a respite from all the proceedings and promises that may or may not come to more critical days ahead.

As another year is coming to a close, it is best to remember our blessings and to thank the Almighty for getting us through the year in relatively good shape. Before our death comes as rare as the passenger pigeon to inch up closer to P56 to the dollar, and chicken has now become an endangered species in our markets, we still have a few things to be grateful for.

The most important blessing has been our continued economic improvement over the U.S. consumption-driven Buenos Fernando have done wonders to keep activities moving, and I hope we don't lose faith in the months to come because Metro Manila is where the action is finally headed. The city shouldn't shoulder a major share of the time, tax-income and investment, and a real loss for the capital region. Earlier I said that we should refrain from talking about politicians. Actually, I don't think of Bermudez as a politician. He is a businessman who is willing to support them in an attempt to improve the everyday lives of people and who is willing to face down an unruly student and noisy minority for the good and benefit of most of the community he has also helped in the past. His good sense of humor is also a strong suit. He lost this race, which is probably why there has been little resistance to reforms and changes initiated by his agency.

* * *

After reading the special report of Joel Rocamora et al on how hundreds of lives and worth an inspiration to the Communist movements were wasted and killed by party members of suspicion of being "deep penetration agents" of the military, I was reminded of my own neighbor who, almost 15 years ago, left his studies at the University of the Philippines to join the movement. I had shelved thoughts of him as perfect material for the cadre corps in the Philippine Military Academy. He was tall, athletic, and had good grades and would have been a strong candidate for first appointee (to corps of cadets), he was also good-looking, and the girls would have been swooning all over him. But early in the day, he got separated from classes, and after awhile, stood some hours through the graduation that he was "in the movement."

Two months ago, he appeared at one of the family reunions with his girlfriend wife, also a member of the movement. He had decided on it all, really "come down," go back to school and catch up with the rest of his life. He had given 15 years to the movement.

We didn't talk too much and the war we fought about changed his mind. But we are thankful that he is back. It doesn't age. All kids get their own handsome baby boy.

* * *

In more than 25 years, we have always spent Christmas, either Eve or Christmas, with the Perlitos and Bing families. Willy Perlitos and Betty Bing married one with me in the Basilica of Caysasay in 1977. Just recently, Betty and Willy managed to keep in touch every month or during the holidays. Bing Abeto is usually with us, but there that he is in the United States visiting the family. Our children are all grown up, some with families of their own, making us grandparents.

As everyone knows, Willy P is the hardworking BH communications, struggling to keep the dollars down while Betty M. is president of Lavanya Shopping Corp. We are grateful for their friendship and their company.

* * *

More than anything else, our children Miguel, Francisco and Carmela, and the grandchildren, Christine, Nicole and Gracie, are our greatest blessing. I am reminded of the prose of Khalil Gibran, a Lebanese-American poet, who we present is beautiful lines the relationship between parents and children, particularly between each of them and us in life:

Your children are not your children
They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself
They come through you but not from you
And though they are with you
yet they belong not to you.
You may give them your love but not your thoughts

For they have their own thoughts
You may house their bodies but not their souls
For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow
Which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams
You may strive to be like them
But seek not to make them like you
For life goes not backward
nor tarries with yesterday
You are the bows from which your children
as living arrows are sent forth
The archer sees the mark upon the path of the infinite, and He bends you with His might
That His arrows may go swift and far.
Let your bending in the archer's hand be for gladness
For even as He loves the arrow that flies
So He loves also the bow that is stable.

Nothing comes even remotely close to the pride and happiness they have given us over the years. They are now living lives of their own and one can only hope that the arrow flies swift and far, meeting in its accuracy as it moves toward the targets set by the Divine Archer above.

Bittersweet remembrance

ARIS FERNANDO, La Union — What is so important that you are willing to travel almost a day by air and land just to be able to attend it? Could anything be that compelling?

It could be a dentist in the family or a lawsuit case. A golden anniversary. The wedding of your best friend. A court case involving a ton of money.

In the case, it was none of the above. It was an invitation to a memorial 130 years of my old high school, which was born in December 1, 1865, older than the Philippine flag and the Philippines 200 miles away, where I would eventually go to college.

COMMENTARY

Belinda A. Aquino

You soon learning because it's like being jolted. You can only attend a centennial once in your lifetime, perhaps two even.

Because the memorial was not exactly set in Hawaii, and I have a handful of papers to correct, I was hesitant. And because it's the Christmas season, air fares are sky high and the overbooked, non-stop flights are already taken. It is the worst time to travel.

I ended up taking a 36 hours flight from Hawaii, including an hours on stopovers, and another six hours by car from Manila to my old hometown, now the City of San Fernando, La Union. There I have important a convention of the major reunion that shaped your young life can be.

I'm glad I made the journey just for attending the celebration has given me a fitting perspective of this stage in my life that I have always taken for granted. A rare picture obtained by Virgilio Bautista of Class '51 from the National Archives in Washington, D.C. shows an American woman in a carriage surrounded by a group of girls taken on the high school grounds in 1901, possibly my former classmates of the female class. Obviously, the American teacher was one of the first Thomasites sent to the Philippines after it was annexed by the United States in 1898. Their mission as civilization of who she was and who the members of the free class were. The other carriage, though unidentified by Virgilio was, were there any boys at this first class?

It got me thinking about how much we missed learning about the history of our own school during the American colonial period. We had courses in Philippine and American history all through high school but hardly any information about how the public school system was established in the early 1900s.

I recall my mother saying in those early years, since you finished the equivalent of seventh grade under the "Intella" system introduced by the Spanish, you could already teach or go to college. She was only fifteen but she gone through this system and I understood that they skipped high school and went straight to Manila. She took nursing at the Philippine General Hospital, which would have become part of UP, and my father took law at the Liceo de Manila. They would permanently settle in Manila and I was born there to enter a family of eight, with me coming at the tail end.

One of my father's cousins had become acting principal of the La Union High School in the 1930s. This was a name for schoolmaster because the Philippinization of the public schools was under way. Sensed and knew Thomasites were coming as principals of the high schools in the provinces and were being watered to take on leadership positions. A prominent La Union citizen, Camilo Osias, would eventually become Philippine resident commissioner in the United States and later Filipino representative of students. He would become Senator Osias and a founder of Philippine Columbian Association. "Osias Brains," which would be used as instructional material in the public schools, it was a book of jokes and poetry, one time exposure to Philippine literature in English. We had to read the "Osias Reader" by heart.

Because the high school was the only game in town in its early years, just about everyone in the province was a public school product. Several generations of my older siblings and relatives attended the high school. It became a family tradition.

My whole world as the youngest in the family line was shaped mostly by their experiences and stories as students of the high school. I would never say that I "chose" to attend "because I was surrounded by adults, either siblings or extended family members, who would dote on me because I was the only child around. In turn I was so awed by the friends and classmates of my brothers and sisters, who would come around to the house to visit, they'd did every's many times. I would identify people in the school pictures in some of the years they attended the high school. "This were the classmate of my oldest sister in high school," or "You were so-and-so with my brother."

When it came time for me to attend the school, it was somehow the end of an era. I had no classmates, siblings or sisters to pass on the mantle. How of my closest and nephews around later entered private schools that were giving the only public high school in town great competition. Meanwhile, public school attendance began to decline as more and more parents developed an understanding some being established mostly for political reasons. Government scholarships were being spread out too thinly. My old high school became a "nationalized" institution. But it has lost much of its prestige, as well as reaching to the campuses with time.

It is a bit painful to see many of the facilities we had used in my years diminished in size. I had to walk to the other end of the campus to help create the old atmosphere. I used to look for my garden spot that we were asked to "cultivate" as part of my "character-building" activities in the '50s. It was no longer there, of course.

So, as I sit here on the old bulletwood grounds several decades later, contemplating my university years, including in the early of my youth, I smile at how lucky I was to be in the high school which prepared me for a more rigorous routine at UP and in later life.

In our senior year, the school administration decided to go "co-ed," ending those years of "segregation," when the girls had entered the high school in junior year. The girls had always been accustomed to be relegated to Section 4. During our senior year, we had our usual revenge, and proved to everybody. And we were equally deserving to be in Section 1.

I would like to end with a note on our distinguished and talented alumni. Among the legends, one of the early Filipino writers in English and of "Have You Seen Zamora Brought Home a Wife" fame, was a member of Class 1920. The setting of many of his stories was his hometown of Bauang. He was Casimiro Ruiz, not as well-known, but equally gifted as a three were writers. Perhaps the most famous alumnus is the literary field was Bienvenido Lumbera, poet-painter and critic, who was in the class of 1950.

There are many more distinguished alumni of our school, but space limitations prevent me from mentioning them all. We will no longer be around in the near centennial, but this succession of our early alumnae will still be there because it has stood the test of time and has become part of everybody's "unconscious." It will live on.

* * *

Belinda A. Aquino is based at the University of Hawaii as professor of political science and director of its Center for Philippine Studies.

The last year of my 40s

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

P.S. In counting the last year of my 40s in about two weeks, but instead of filling me with dread, I looked of looking forward to the coming year, a couple before would feel respectable and solidly 50's or 51.

I was so thrilled that last year of my 40s and I thought I might no longer be able to do so as certified "fortieth." I've noticed that middle-age has increasingly been demarcated by a flexible cubic, a transitional state during which people are still in their 40s, but are age barriers. At 40 or more years, the generation of my parents was considered firmly ensconced in "senior citizen" status, with all the privileges of passports at weekly wedding games and poker sessions, and willing to commute to cafe down the street on my father in the limits was having theft cuts. But those days, people in their 40s and 50s are considered "seniors" as well, and experiencing the same problems with seniors who are decades younger, filling up dinner theirs and barely breaking a sweat while their younger partners gasp and sag for an and sometimes, even, collapse. Yes, 40 is the new 50, and no discussing and pulling rank.

The boundaries are blurring, but for women 50 years is a definite threshold. I'm not about to make it to my bed, wear a shawl and then wait out the rest of my days. But I do feel that I've earned the right, especially those with children, as expected to exhibit some dignity, at least, or some decorum, be I have just one year to do everything I've always wanted to do, and I'm not about to waste it. I'm determined to be as much of a free spirit as I can be, within reason, and to do everything I've always wanted to do, but was afraid to do because I was "too old" for it.

I want to be able to watch Filipino films, especially the sappy romance "telly" ones without having to hide and distance my daughters, or pretend to watch silly action movies with the others in a cringe.

As a corny, I want to be able to vote for the next president of this country even knowing that things will get harder and more complicated, so as not to be "fit to vote" at an early" among the people making my way, the range of having to make an unhappy choice just to fulfill my obligation. I want to vote for someone I truly believe in, someone who's capable of leading this country, and not for someone who holds out and hope and the possibility of change. So each person can do the bottom.

* * *

I WANT to see passionate careers and chocolates without guilt or a wedding from my realtors' eulogies. I want to be able to slather bread with butter in the morning without mentally counting the calories or calculating rhetorically how much I'll have to work it off. I want to be able to get chocolates without having to pretend that appreciate and adore as enough to fortify me.

On the last year of my 40s, I want to come to look forward to my 50s, and believe that I have not left behind the best years of my life but rather, am just embarking on them, moving on to richer sides and a brighter horizon.

The mass media in a democracy

PUBLIC LIVES

Randy David

THOMAS Jefferson devoted considerable attention to the issues filing by ordinary individuals of their enrollment of candidates for the presidency. The term economic method their improbable claims and unfounded statements and provided the public, at the moment to time, their eminence candidacy.

Through the basic and was one of disinterested decision, each espousage is somewhat less consistent with the mass media's original role in a democracy. It is also high time to examine the role of the press for electoral political debate. Our will truly emerge from actual choices and basic informed choices.

I address this at a role the media in our society have not played consistently and effectively. They have not enabled us to examine the issues facing the nation. They have not given the public the background information they need to form educated arguments on these issues. They have not raised the questions that candidates must answer if they are to be engaged as serious contenders for public office.

When the media fail in this role, democracy is reduced instead to a popularity contest. Individuals are accustomed to indulging passions instead of reasoning. Elections are determined by the most shallow reasons, rather than on their record of service to the country or known stand on basic issues. They are prompted to act under their own unclear, over their lack of preparation by major election campaigns that are more like marketing campaigns than arguments. Issues are not challenged exclusively and debates the reasons for their preferences. They are kept blind to the fatal consequences of their inaction and to the fatal consequences of their inaction.

There was a time when celebrities and persons prior who had made their mark in other fields would use public themselves to be easily drawn into politics. The responsibilities of public office demanded more than popularity. It called for intellect, or justice in charge of leadership recruitment took the requirements of public service seriously. They demanded not just a pleasing face or an ear that could carry a tune. They looked for men and women who had addicts, and had good grades and would have been a strong candidates for first appointee (to corps of cadets), he was also good-looking, and the girls would have been swooning all over him. But early in the day, he got separated from classes, and after awhile, stood some hours through the graduation that he was "in the movement."

Two months ago, he appeared at one of the family reunions with his girlfriend wife, also a member of the movement. He had decided on it all, really "come down," go back to school and catch up with the rest of his life. He had given 15 years to the movement.

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Your children are not your children
They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself
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And though they are with you
yet they belong not to you.
You may give them your love but not your thoughts

For they have their own thoughts
You may house their bodies but not their souls
For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow
Which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams
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But seek not to make them like you
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You are the bows from which your children
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TALK of the TOWN

Please send feedback to opinion@inquirer.com.ph

Editor Jaime V. Ongpin Jr.

Samareños have learned their lesson

By Clare Hubang-Calzado
former president, Samar Island Biodiversity Foundation

The tragedy that happened in Southern Leyte belongs to Island the disaster on this bit Similar 15 years ago. In January 1991, continuous rains caused flash floods in the towns of Jiabong, Oras and Borongan in Eastern Samar, and in the county of Guiuan, Carigara, Tacloban and the Biliran in Western Visayas. The flash floods and landslides buried villages, killed 79 people, displaced more than 50,000 families and destroyed crops worth more than P300 million.

In a homestay along the Jiabong river, a farmer recalled that the waters suddenly rose. There was barely enough time to bring the women and children to higher ground. There was no second trip to bring the carabaos to safety. The towns of Guiuan and Carigara were inundated for several days. Similar catastrophes were unleashed by storms.

The disaster triggered calls for an end to logging. At the time of the flooding, 15 logging concessionaires were operating in the three provinces of Eastern Samar, the biggest of which was former Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile's. Sen. Jose Tesdao, Samarefios blamed the disaster on the logging operations. In response, then Environment Secretary Fulgencio Factoran issued a logging moratorium, which was revoked all logging operations from February to May.

Hunger

In June, the people were still reeling from the disaster. Hunger broke out in the hardest hit villages in Northern and Eastern Samar. Relief were those of despair as they moved as their farmlands blanket of silt a mixed deep silt. Wiping their sad tears, they set out to rebuild their lives and restore lost—their homelands for the return in search of livelihood. Samar island was in a state of agony. The only option for the department of Environment and Natural Resources was to extend the logging moratorium indefinitely. And the moratorium is still in effect.

As the sites of the disaster, Samar island had been stripped of more than half a million hectares of forests. The deforestation rate was 32,000 hectares a year or one hectare every 16 minutes. A 1997 satellite photograph of Samar's forests showed in 1987 that its forest cover had been reduced to 53 percent or a total of 449,000 hectares.

The disaster served as a wake-up call for Samarefios. All of a sudden, they became more doggedly persevered in preserving the remaining rainforests. In 1996, NGOs and LGUs campaigned to stop the road construction that would have cut across one of the old growth forests. In 1997, the late President Fidel V. Ramos to declare the remaining forests in the three provinces of Samar as Samila Forest Reserve. "... the effects of deforestation are still being felt by the people of Samar despite the implementation by the government of a logging moratorium for the past five years. ..." Fortunately for us, President Ramos acted favorably to the same year, the NGOs endorsed to DENR a proposal to conserve the bio-diversity of the remaining rainforests in Samar. And by the end of 1997, the Samila Forest Reserve was declared as the first protected area.

Protected area

In 2001, the DENR launched the former Samila Forest Reserve as the first protected area to conserve the rich biodiversity of the island. This year, in a historic moment, the Church, the LGUs, civil society and various humanitarian from all over the island again took the road to Catbalogan, capital town of Samar, to ask President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo to declare the entire region into a protected area and to express their opposition to plans for mining activities on the island. Fortunately, Mr. Arroyo signed and favorably and declared 105,000 hectares of forests lands in the island as protected areas.

The war's disaster to trees and forests are but one area of a series of disasters that have struck our country in the past decade, we have painfully witnessed disasters after disaster, tragedy after tragedy in many parts of the country. If we look deep into them, these disasters were rooted in neglect. The results are the same ... land stripped of forest cover by logging, by mining operations, by land conversion ... heavy rains, flash floods, landslides ... tragedy ...

Where will our trees leave? Fortunately the agony brought about by the floods in 1991 and barely improved on the attitude of the people in the people. They have persevered in preserving the environment against threats from logging and mining.

Protect forests, change lifestyle

By Anabelle S. Plantilla
Executive Director, Haribon Foundation

It is time once more, to remind us of the word "conservation" and say related concerns have been contained in disaster. The country's biodiversity is our nation's natural heritage. Therefore, it must be the responsibility of every citizen. The involvement of ordinary individuals and communities is critical in sustaining any national or local level concern for biodiversity conservation.

Stockpiling

How do we do that? We can all contribute our lifestyles and see how we can each change. In the very least, we should practice recycling and try to avoid consuming products with too much packaging as these are also made from natural resources. Let us conserve water and electricity which are products of our forests. By doing these, we lessen the pressures on our natural resources. At the same time, we should all be vigilant and actively advocate the implementation of environmental laws. And this we should today as well elected and appointed leaders. Policies that shape the nation and public opinions and pressures are created in the urban centers, thus, it is important that we all be part of a constituency for biodiversity conservation.

Our forest has diminished 117 hectares into diversity areas, which should be actively protected and not just protected on paper. A answer effort from governments in the allocation of ample budgets for these areas for effective management to take place. Current efforts on forest conservation among immediate stakeholders like the local governments and communities, civic and religious organizations, NGOs and people's organizations and even the academe should be promoted and replicated. At the same time, government should reexamine the policies that have an impact on the remaining natural forests. The government must should seriously consider setting up short-term financial gains from extractive industries like mining vis-à-vis the long-term economic and ecological benefits, which maybe derived from the protection of natural ecosystems.

Yes, if we do not make the right choices now, there will be other similar tragedies like the most recent one in Leyte.

Policy reforms and actions needed

By Elisea (Bebet) G. Gozun
Secretary, Department of Environment and Natural Resources

Many people have correctly pointed to deforestation as the root cause of the landslides and floods on Petmon Island in Southern Leyte.

However, in this particular case, illegal logging is not the main cause of deforestation. The loss of forest cover on the island has been due largely to the legal cutting of trees as a result of the reclassification of declared from forest lands to alienable and disposable (A&D) lands and the subsequent change in the use of the same land to agriculture, usually to monoculture plantations. The trees were cut from private lands, not from public or forestlands. This is not to say that there was absolutely no illegal logging in the area.

Recently, in 2004, much of the area had already been converted to alienable and disposable lands, long before the passage of the Forestry Code in 1975. Thus, even current environmental laws in which trees were also converted from forest to A&D, which was confirmed when the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) conducted an ocular inspection of the area on Dec. 21. Technical knowledge developed after 1920 now tells us that lands, which have slopes of more than 50 percent are prone to erosion and landslides and should therefore be maintained as forest land. The National Mapping and Resource Information Authority estimates that about 60 percent of Petmon's land area of 25,000 hectares falls in the 50 percent slope and higher.

Fact-finding

Compounding the land conversion are certain natural and geologic factors. Petmon Island is surrounded by some of the boundaries of the Philippine Fault. As a result, earthquakes are frequent. In fact, the earthquakes have not really broken of time. Under these geologic conditions, when rainfall occurs, water inevitably seeps into the fractures.

For the past 30 years, the average rainfall in the Southern part the Dinomalan is about 175 mm per day. Continuous rains on Dec. 17 to 20 reached 600 mm. In just three days, the average monthly rainfall was exceeded by as much as four times. The weight of the water was enormous and the ground was saturated to the point of flooding.

Considering the above facts, as single agency or person can be blamed. Clearly the heavy rains served as the trigger.

The highlights the very important ecological function, which trees serve. They absorb water and recharge our aquifers. And, they also hold the soil.

We must also realize that some of us can produce the attendant consequences, we can certainly do something to lessen the risk of the tragedies such as this on Petmon Island and Guinsa from occurring again.

Specifically, we must promote reforestation efforts in forested areas that will lead to flooding and landslides. We need to protect our remaining forests and rehabilitate the denuded ones.

While more than claims ratified between the Philippine government and government we depend on its resources alone. We thus actively encourage stakeholders to get involved through various programs such as the Adopt a Mountain, collaborative-based forest management, tree farming and industrial tree plantations. Investment of just about P3 billion for area needing rehabilitation are being given to interested and qualified parties for planting and protection for 25 years.

The DENR is promoting some seedlings and fruit-bearing species.

The Philippines has adopted sustainable development as its framework for development since 1992. This means a development that does not only consider short-term economic gains but ensures long-term environmental.

Preventing our remaining forested areas and rehabilitating denuded ones is key to ensuring sustainable development.

Major landslides since 1990

Nov. 1, 1994, Guinsa, Southern Leyte. A devastating flood and landslide brought on by typhoon "Unding" killed more than 3,000 people, many of them women and children. More than 4,000 were never found. Walls of mud and water roared down the mountains, washing away nearby settlements along the road, sweeping people into the sea and burying survivors.

Sept. 5, 1995, Lake Mangilao, Mt. Parker. The rumble of Lake Mangilao, some 3,000 feet above sea level on the slope of Mt. Parker, grew in. Within roped through several towns of South Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat and Maguindanao killing 700. A total of 1,700 residents missing.

Oct. 17, 1999, Camarines. A landslide at the height of typhoon "Loleng" killed 39 people in Guinayan, Kalakbayan in San Miguel and others in Camarines Sur.

Aug. 3, 1999, Cherry Hills Subdivision in Brgy. Sumilao, Bukidnon City. Rainfall measuring 1,400 millimeters and two successive mud flows destroying 224 houses and killing 56 people.

July 10, 2000, Payatas. Quezon City. Following a week of heavy rains brought on by typhoons "Gloring" and "Helen," the garbage mountain of Payatas dumpsite collapsed, burying some 400 shanties and killing more than 217 people. Over 35 were reported missing and believed to be still buried under the mountain of garbage.

Nov. 1, 2001, Mabinay, Camiguin. Typhoon "Nanang" brought death and destruction to Camiguin. At least 187 people and hundreds of farm animals died when mud and boulders buried Barangays Guinsa in Mabinay, Bulangan in Mahinog town.

(Compiled by Ian Lucas, PDI Research)

Editor Louie C. Cuenco

"CAPTAIN" Bong Revilla leads the movie's cast on the "Barbell" float on the festival's Christmas Day parade.

'Barbell' vs 'Fantastic'

By Hazmel B. Cruz

THE LATE Lyndo untold Mars Ravelo's fantasy-adventure "Captain Barbell," starring Bong Revilla and Regine Velasquez, was the box-office top-grosser on the Christmas Day opening of the Metro Manila Film Festival in Manila theaters, according to Cubao's City Mayor Roy Mabasa.

Mabasa, who is also the film festival chairperson, said the opening-day results were based on the returns from 10 theaters only.

"We will get the exact figures as soon as other theaters submit their returns," Mabasa told Inquirer Entertainment last Friday. "We also expect to update the previous figures today."

As of 10 this morning, it was a neck-and-neck fight between Imus Productions' "Captain Barbell" and GreenArc Films' "Fantastic Man," with the former leading by only P800,000, he said.

"Captain Barbell," also features Ogie Alcasid as Lemuel, who turns into the superhero played by Bong Revilla; Regine as Dana, and Albert Martinez as the villain Lagdidab.

"It really does not matter to me who earned more on Christmas Day," said Bong during Friday's variety party for the movie's cast in a Quezon City restaurant. "Any impressive purchase (ticket) is better if we call it a hit."

In 2002, Octoarts teamed up with M.Jar Films to produce one of last year's top-grossing festival movies, "Landmarks." In this year's "Fantastic Man," lead star Vic Sotto ditches the dark blue-and-white suit of Landmarks and sports a more vivid magenta and mustard costume. The movie also stars Ate Shiela, Michael V. and Jeffrey Quiboloy.

Regal Films' period drama "Shaya Ft 2," starring Snooky Serna and Lotlot Montilla-among others, came in third on opening day. It was closely followed by United Pictures' "Crying Ladies," starring Sharon Cuneta, Maria Rowell and Angel Aquino.

But it is also a close fight between Regal and United in the No. 3 and No. 4 spots, with a difference of only P1,000 or P2,000, said a film-fest official who refused to be identified.

"But this is only based on the number of people lining up outside the theaters," the film-fest official said. "We have yet to count the cash in the smart liquor."

The official added that Cesar Montano's pro-life film "Mulawin2" is "very close" to fifth place.

Mabasa, as well as the other film fest official, refused to reveal which movie landed on the ninth and seventh places.

The two other festival movies are "Dyesebel" (Regine Velasquez and Dennis Trillo) and "Homecoming" (Ruffa Gutierrez, Richard Gutierrez and Jericho Rosales).

Film festival numbers said "Dyesebel" ranked No. 6 and "Homecoming" No. 7 on opening day.

According to festival rules, the two movies that earned the least after a week will be replaced in theaters by the two others—Jeffrey Jeturian's "Bridal Shower" from Seiko Films and Erik Matti's "Cargadora" from MAQ Films.

INQUIRER Mindanao

Cityjun Bandayrel
Karen Cay Nino S. Alemania

Buried gifts, buried hopes in Surigao

By Ma. Kristina E. Cassion
Surigao City

IN SCOLLOW even in loss, the five grandchildren salvaged by the rescuers of Janet Jacquez (inset) have found solace.

SEVENTEEN-YEAR-OLD Jimiko Ranalan was supposed to attend a Christmas party in his school that fateful Friday morning.

He was already a few meters down the road from their house when he suddenly heard a thunderous explosion up to the mountain. He could not believe what he saw.

Rocks, trees and mud rushed from the mountain toward their house. As if all Antique's fear had come to chase him, Jimiko spot toward their house, tears cascading down his cheeks.

"Mama! Asul Mama (Dad)," he shouted. His two aunts were already buried, together with six other cousins, including 8-month-old Summer and 4-month-old Ljhoshkaru.

As rocks above descended, Jimiko ordered frantically on dig his way to the house, where another surge of mud descended toward him, tossing and injuring him to the top.

Finally, Engr. Antonette Jimiko, his cousin was also working but was his safety as he saw another landslide making its way.

This was just one of the many tragic communities experienced in the landslide in Purok 3, Sitio Kinabuhan, Barangay Rizal in Surigao City on that morning of Dec. 17.

Several weeks before commute was preceded Surigao City and other areas in the Caraga, the rain was big, and people everywhere were busy preparing for the holidays.

During the heavy downpour due to rushed in widespread flooding in the city, the villagers did see signs of unwavering, believing they were already safe on high ground. They did not expect that a landslide would occur, for they have been living there for so many years without experiencing such problems.

Complacency became dark downhill. The Ranalans were inside in for the night behind the time of 11 family members and rained supplies as some others. Several barangay officials were monitored.

Countdown

Christmas Eve was only a few hours away. While our farmers, looking was of the windows, the big rainfall had lasted and he was back in a few hours over the highway. But he could see more glance at the blinking lights on the Christmas tree and other decorations in the house.

Jimiko had lived with his aunts since summer, working for them in exchange for board and lodging, and schooling. He goes to the nearby Rizal National High School.

"It pains me deeply now that their are gone. We cousins and I were very close and it was helped take care of the babies. I was looking forward to spending the holidays with them. My Mama Ana and Mama Lita already wrapped my gifts and we were planning a short outing together with my brothers," he said.

But now, Jimiko's brothers, was grateful despite the misfortune. At least he was surprised.

"This is the best Christmas gift the Lord has given me. Although we could not celebrate Christmas eve as we used to since we are still in mourning, we still have Mama and Asul. Got for sparing them," he said.

Fr Nobbie who lost her husband husband and daughters Pr Anne and Ranmar, spent Christmas at the hospital where her 5-year-old daughter Sabina Mae and her Grandmother Al were still recovering from injuries.

He was working in the city when the landslide occurred. When she heard the news, she immediately went home, only to find Ana is was buried under boulders and mud.

Several neighbors, including members of a search and rescue team, were trying to remove Sabina and Grandmother Al from the debris.

On that day, too, the remains of Ranmar were recovered. Three of the dead and five bodies were found the following day.

It was on the eve of the landslide on Christmas eve, offering comfort for her dead. She was sobbing as she waited see the five generations that the rescue team had salvaged from their house. Each was wrapped in each stretcher that is made her cry.

"I could not think of spending Christmas without them. How can I survive a lifetime without the husband who has been with for decades and daughters like Pr Anne who was only 3 years old and Ranmar was only 24 years old. They could have had a good life ahead of them," he said.

"But I have no time to dwell more as in recovering surviving children, they are all that I have now."

At the hospital, Fr. she found that Sabina had asked for a doll for Christmas, while Grandmother Al wanted a toy video. That's gifts had been buried in rubble which they know, but Fr promised to buy them gifts again.

"The Christmas way now will be different, but I have to give them the gifts they had to have asking for. It only worsen the sorrow and pain of what they have experienced," he said.

Christmas gift

The elders, too, are yearning for a gift this Christmas. For instance Commodo, 57, is a widow whom she could go home to.

Antonia once lived with her 58-year-old husband and three children in a rented house on Barangay and Rizal Boulevard near the river, on one side, and the sea, on the other. The heavy flooding and strong currents brought about by the monsoonal downpour swept away their house and meager possessions.

The couple has since been living with relatives evacuees in the provincial gymnasium that has been turned into an emergency shelter.

Antonia lamented that the Provincial Social Welfare and Development Office has rushed down her plea for relief foods. She was told that she was not included as such assistance as they were only renting the place.

"How about us who are actually living in the place and whose possessions were lost? I think we are also entitled for some family food. We do not have to food to eat, neither house and my relatives are still in school," Antonia said.

She appealed as any attitude to help them are gift this Christmas.

2 rookies defy police ban on firing guns

By Tina Santos
and Leila Salaverria

DESPITE THREATS by the police have been received and to disciplinary action, no celebrations for the passing of the year—an offense that calls for overnight detention!—two rookie lawmen on Christmas Day allegedly shot just that, resembling a bystander and a responding police station in Quezon City.

PO1 Manuel Keith Ang and PO1 Eduardo Dalumpines of the Quezon Police were said to be drunk when they started firing their guns in front of a convenience store in Regina Village at around 7:30 p.m. Both men were about to buy cases beer when they fired their guns and wounded Saul John Herrera, 21.

SPO4 Jaime dela Cuesta was also wounded in the incident, police said.

The incident came a day before Deputy Director General Ricardo de Leon, National Capital Region Police Office chief, warned his men to refrain from carrying their firearms during celebrations.

De Leon said that any lawman caught or reported to have discharged his gun would be placed under arrest and will be criminally charged.

The same rule applies to 5-second aerial-gun ceremony.

"A gun owner caught firing his gun indiscriminately risks losing his license and faces criminal charges," he said.

Meanwhile, Quezon Police District director Chief Supt. Pedro Bulaong yesterday urged lawmen to make drunken shooters and lawmakers that are not illegal to celebrate 2002.

Bulaong said that on Dec. 30, the results of the Memory of Lawmen would be arranged with making sure to ensure that the gun would not be used unnecessarily.

After the holiday comes the nightmare

CITY workers clean up after revelers have had their fun at the the Cultural Center of the Philippines Complex

By Robert Tarobia Jr.

THE CHRISTMAS parties are over. Now, the nightmare begins.

Where people had gathered on the night before Christmas, there now are piles of garbage. The fumes of firecrackers have been replaced by the disgusting smell of rotting leftovers and garbage mixed with used cans, bottles, gift wrappers and plastic packs.

The post-Christmas garbage problem has also become worse because garbage collectors have taken a much deserved break from their jobs.

Thus, Ley made like Commonwealth Avenue in Quezon City and areas in Caloocan City were decorated with mounds of garbage as of Thursday.

In Tagaz Dagupan Avenue, near the corner of Commonwealth Avenue, residents and passengers on Thursday were treated to a disgusting smell that never failed to catch attention.

The location sees a 20-meter stack of garbage along the street, eating up the road's right-of-way.

Residents told the Inquirer that they had gotten used to seeing and smelling the garbage in the area, but that has worsened on Friday. The garbage collectors has increased as the garbage collectors went on holiday—presumably generating garbage themselves.

LGUs lose millions in 'tiangge' sales

By Luige del Puerro and Tina Santos

OLD GOVERNMENT is losing millions of pesos in uncollected dues from flea markets or "tiangges," according to the Bureau of Internal Revenue.

At the Greenhills Shopping Complex in San Juan, nine percent of vendors have not been paying corresponding taxes, as mandated under Revenue Regulation 24-2001.

BIR Commissioner Guillermo Parayno discovered this when around 30 tax examiners swooped down on mall owners in the commercial complex last week.

Of the 350 flea markets inspected, only 20 have been issuing updated receipts. The examiners also found unregistered receipts, or they give out old receipts, according to Ceferino Leyrero, San Juan's internal revenue chief.

The non-issuance of receipts alone is already ground for closure.

Leyrero said the majority are also not paying the mandated fee of P100 per day or P4,500 per month, to the city and municipal governments.

Diosdi BIR rules, the payment should be made in advance through banks.

Leyrero, however, clarified that this is not only happening at the Greenhills Shopping Complex, but is actually rampant throughout the country.

Tiangge owners had earlier protested against revenue regulation 15-2000, and had asked then Finance Secretary Isidro Camacho to scrap it or amend it.

Under the amended version, 24-2000, tiangge operators must be registered and given business permits, just like those with regular businesses.

The BIR official said they will be sending letters to mall owners, explaining the rules and asking them to pay the necessary penalties.

Tiangge operators have chosen if they ignore the BIR, Leyrero said.

But Leyrero said they would be given ample time.

"We don't want them to close shop," Leyrero said. "We just want them to pay their corresponding taxes."

"If they can afford to pay P1,500 per day for the stall's rent, then there is no reason why they can't pay the BIR P150 per day," he said.

Licenses for hawkers

To protect the livelihood of ambulant vendors in Quezon City, the local council of has approved an ordinance providing for the registration of their businesses.

The ordinance, introduced by 11 councilors led by Julius Cesario, would be known as the "Vendor Registration and Security Ordinance."

The councilors said the law seeks to protect the vendors from being displaced of their source of income. The measure will also protect the rights of consumers.

Under the ordinance, vendors are required to procure barangay certificates according that they are residents of the city where they will do business.

The ordinance also authorizes the city mayor to assign vending spaces for qualified vendors, who will be required to display their business permits while selling their wares.

But the ordinance will still be prohibited from selling their wares in places not designated by the city government, particularly on major roads.

Beggars too, get to feed, feel the spirit of Xmas

ILLUSTRATION BY ROY CABRERA

By Vub Cosmerus

LIKE the shepherds of Bethlehem on the first Christmas night, street children in Quezon City and Manila were treated to a celebration from unusual visitors. Manila spent their festive Barong around a bonfire.

It was the traditional Christmas fun ride at the Joss Rebella Center in Mandaluyong City, one of the facilities of the Department of Social Welfare and Development for needing broken, homeless boys picked up from the streets.

While the rest of the metropolis had families were enjoying their gifts around glittering Christmas trees, JPCs "clients" spotted their spartan dorm, courtesy of private donors, by the roaring flames from thrumming Ilocanos is transported.

After the donated food—complete with spaghetti, fruits, apples and ice cream—were passed around, JPCs 1,00 residents celebrated the birth of Christ by dancing, singing and playing parlor games.

And in their fashion at nights, search like Benny Kalinga, 25, declared that the "clearing" session that he is "lucky" to be in such company, despite being penniless and abandoned by parents since his infancy.

"I just told my fellow dorms that we're still hungry, actually, there many others, like the Sandoval (Quezon in Dasmarinas) Leyte," Kalinga on Friday said in Filipino.

He was referring to the Dec. 20 disaster that had claimed more 700 lives in the Visayan province.

Kalinga said he was left by his impoverished mother, Elizabeth, to the care of the social workers when he was almost a year old.

A family later adopted him, but after several years, he "rebelled" and left his foster parents for our ruling him at once about his true identity. He eventually find home and got "to-and-out" of different social welfare institutions.

He was admitted to the JPC last May 16. The center is presently trying to locate his parents and siblings.

During the Noche Buena program, Kalinga said he has made his fellow clients realize that the "spirit of Christmas" was very much alive, at present by the gifts and food sent to them by kind strangers.

JPC staff member Marilou Abaya said among the private donors who gave food and gifts to the center this Christmas are Mandaluyong City Rotarians, students from the AMA computer school, Shangri-La Hotel Makati, members from the Imelda Lodo Concepcion school in San Juan, and a Chinese temple.

The DSWD runs the center was just to provide meals and lodging for the dorms, until they can be reunited to their respective families, but also so revise their self-esteem and positive disposition through a series of counseling sessions conducted during their stay.

Man stabs wife, her lover in Valenzuela

BOTHER Agatos allegedly stabbed and killed a man he thought was his estranged wife's lover in Valenzuela City on Thursday. The police also arrested him of stabbing and wounding the woman he once loved.

Killed with overdose, Agatos on Friday surrendered to the police.

At 12:30 a.m., Christmas Day, Bonnie was drinking with his wife, Arnaldo Agatos, and to-ride driver Aurelio Candido, 21, inside Arnaldo's canteen at Sto. Rosario Street, Magsaysay Lupa, Valenzuela, when Bonnie saw Aurelio and Arnaldo's wife having rush caller's hands, said PO2 Gerald Bautista.

Bonnie, who had separated from his wife several months ago, allegedly got furious, grabbed a knife and stabbed the two.

Candido died on the spot. Arnaldo was taken to the Valenzuela City General Hospital for treatment.

At 6 p.m. on Friday, Bonnie came out of hiding and surrendered to the police. Adrian Bandoc Jr.

Police officials . . .

(Story, page A18)

from four celebrations.

The police have not received a specific threat from a specific terrorist group, Valenzuela said.

"The threat is promiscuous," said Senior Supt. Antonio Velasquez, head of the Mandaluyong Police. "The national police want our forces reminded, in case of late emergency."

Marikina Police chief Sr. Supt. Felipe Rojas Jr. said the cancellation of the holiday break has something to do with the "international alert against terrorism."

On Monday, the United States government raised its terror alert to the second highest level, and had warned Americans there was a high risk that militants might launch attacks in the United States that would be bigger than those carried out on Sept. 11, 2001.

The local police have been placed on heightened readiness, Rojas said.

With the National Capital Region Police Office on full-alert status, the units manning the 13 roaring thoroughfares in the metropolis have been reinforced from carrying out 400 checkpoints operations to implementing anti-terrorism measures.

NCRPO Director Ricardo De Leon has also ordered the additional deployment of mobile checkpoints, especially in key areas in the metropolis.

In Manila, the police have been directed to step up security measures in the city to ensure that a repeat of the grisly Rizal Day bombings in 2000 would not take place.

The most destructive of the attacks took place at the Rizaloon 65 station of the Light Rail Transit in Manila, where seven Filipinos were killed and dozens injured.

The police have already secured shopping malls, transportation terminals, especially the Metro Rail Transit and Light Railway Transit systems, communication facilities and all airports.

In Marikina, street kids get to party with cops

By Luige del Puerro

PEACE is PROCRASTINATE!

It could have been just a movie bonanza, three packs of eggnog, or a party for Marikina City's slum kids.

Most of the 280 policemen in Marikina have each set aside a day's worth of subsistence allowance—P66—so they could play Santa to the city's less fortunate young wards, according to Senior Supt. Felipe Rojas Jr., city police chief.

The party will start at 9 a.m. at the city's Sports Complex.

Rojas said they would buy the gift items in Divisoria, where goods are cheaper.

Rojas said this is the police's way of giving back to the community, especially to the more vulnerable members of society.

Less endowed and more children are no stranger to each other. Both parent the streets and, at times, often hang out with other under-age children in conflict with the law.

Some of the street kids tend to survive, and cops go catch them, or shoo them away.

But not on Sunday, Rojas said.

"I ordered each precinct commander to bring along 15 street kids from their territories for the party," Rojas said.

The police are also urging residents who have more to share. "Come to the party," he said. "Bring something, anything. It would be fun, I promise."

The Cure Asthma Group, a non-government organization that works closely with the police, latched the idea early this month.

But the NGO didn't have the money to organize the party.

"Yes, I volunteered to set aside a day's subsistence allowance," Rojas said. "It should be enough."

Asked whether his men are grumbling, Rojas said no for he has heard none.

"The cops I talked to said they are willing to part with their money," Rojas said. "Besides, it would all be for a good cause."

Police Insp. Cesa, head of the city's criminal investigation unit, said he and his men are fully supporting the idea.

"It's for our children," Cesa said. "What's left for a few hours of fun?"

POLICEMEN, including this one in a mascot's group, get to treat street children in Quezon City on Christmas. The less fortunate kids in Marikina today will get their turn on Sunday.

METRO

Lira Alabastro S. Olandag

CHERRY HILLS TRAGEDY IN THE MAKING

Rizal folk fear landslide in their backyard

By Rob Cagurova

ALARMED by the tragedy that left 20 residents dead in Southern Leyte and last month's typhoon, people's organizations in San Mateo, Rizal, are renewing calls for a halt on the development of their "high-risk" hills into sprawling subdivisions or golf courses.

The groups cited as top 10 "prohibited" assessment" report from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources that identified up to 64 sites where new resident settlement must be urgently applied.

Leaders of the Bantog Sa Isa, and Ating Kalikasan, both based in San Mateo, wanted that "guidance measures" prescribed by the DENR in the report may not be enough to prevent similar, man-triggered landslides in their town.

High-risk areas

"The natural terrain is being modified to suit development projects, instead of the other way around," said Bantog's Lucio, 72, a retired businessman from Barangay Malanday and founding member of Ating Kalikasan. He said that to minimize risk he wants to "restore the original features and [level of] safety of the area."

"Aside from areas we mentioned and identified, the likes of the region's 1999 Cherry Hills landslide[-hit] vicinity, and even the Antonio Luna foothills, might also happen in our town," warned 69-year-old Ka Antonio.

A resident of Barangay Dalig, Gonzales disclosed the long ago with the MGB team on geology investigating six specific high-risk areas. The DENR, geohazards in Mines and Geosciences Bureau, conducted the study upon PTFI's request.

Unstable ground

The report covered the Sta. Barbara Hillet Phase II, an "abandoned" golf course of Filinvest Land Inc., the Area 1 farm-to-market road, Barangay Malanday, Lower Pinang Lupa to Barangay Sto. Niño, and the C-6 Road to Barangay Guitnang Bayan.

The findings on Sta. Barbara, for example, noted that excessive rock and the dumping of loose earth on the sloping terrain have caused the "instability" of the slope.

On the abandoned golf course, the report said "perennial cattle trampling activities spotted and more slopes unstable and... caused situation along the lower portion of the adjacent creek."

Crack on the road

As to the Area 1 road, the report found a "2.09-meter crack" on its surface, after the re-enforcement, and recommended that electrical posts along the road be "relocated to a more viable location."

In Barangay Malanday, the report found that Dela Rosa had become flood-prone because the flow of rainwater that used to be directed via a natural creek is blocked by an apron road or a fishpond "now owned, allegedly by the owner of PBL Resident," a private institution mentioned.

The DENR-MGB also called for the construction of protective walls along Barangay Malanday portion of C-6, also devised a new "catchpit" to "trap fall" from the steep slopes bordering its shoulders.

PERILOUS as the dog may seem to a commuter on a Light Rail Transit coach, the presence of this K-9 unit at the Manila station can only ensure safe passage for the passengers this holiday. INQUIRER

Police officials recall cops on holiday break

By Luige del Puerto, Edson Tandoc Jr. and Lolit Salamero

MANILA, police officials have cancelled the holiday break of Metro Manila members to ensure the presence of a "minimal" crowding force for the New Year celebrations.

Police officials carried a turn to send the order in response to the terrorist alerts raised by international intelligence agencies.

According to a letter of instruction from the Philippine National Police, officials said "unconfirmed reports that terrorist would exploit the holidays."

Policemen who were to be granted have been recalled while those who were scheduled to take the New Year off were told to take their leave after the holidays, Eastern Police District head Chief Supt. Oscar Valientes said.

In case police receive, half of the policemen last year off for a vacation, Valientes police chiefs were given the discretion on how to manage the holiday break of their men.

The Eastern Director said that nationwide police officials want a "red-hot force" for the

SPORTS TV
SUNDAY
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SPORTS

ACTING PSC executive director Edjardo Pilotos shows the checks, dated Dec. 22, 2003, before it was given out to the athletes.

No postdated checks issued to SEAG bets

ATHLETES who won medals in the recent 22nd Southeast Asian Games in Vietnam did not receive their incentives in postdated checks issued by the Philippine Sports Commission.

And the checks were handed out earlier to "give you a very pleasant side" of the Pasalubong at say the athletes "for media mileage."

Three were the sometimes of leaves that Nepomuceno, member-director of Pres. Gloria Macapagal Arroyo "Modelyang Guro, Mrs. Jalan Dejo" program, who introduced as "ambassador" dispenses that same out in an incentive report yesterday with the headline "Athlete Promise Instilled Christmas for SEAG Medalists."

Nepomuceno said the First Gentlemen Foundation was "extremely disappointed" because the story, written by veteran columnist Beads Trinidad, was "based on false information, hearsay and unsubstantiated accusations."

He said "the issue raised by the report on the postdated checks is totally unfounded."

"In the PSC we explain and prove, no such checks were issued. It is not the policy of government agencies to issue postdated checks," Nepomuceno explained.

It was "impossible," he added, that some athletes received incentive checks dated Dec. 29.

Trinidad yesterday clarified that the checks were not postdated, contrary to what his sources at the PSC had claimed. He apologized for the error.

Dimpomuceno also said the statements attributed to chess grandmasters Eugene Torre and Joey Antonio were likewise unfounded.

In a joint statement faxed to the Inquirer yesterday, Torre and Antonio took strong exception to the report.

"We received our checks on Dec. 22, which had all been dated Dec. 22 and not Dec. 29," the two GMs said. "But even if the checks came late, there was no way for Coal to enter any complaint against the Vice Commission who has given special and tremendous support to Philippine chess. ..."

Trinidad said the letter was raised because, despite the fact that the checks were indeed not postdated, the awardees were unable to encash the incentives in time for the holidays because the checks were released after banking hours on Dec. 22.

Trinidad insisted that he got this information from sources in the Philippine Olympic Committee.

The same sources told Trinidad that although the checks were dated Dec. 22, the recipients were advised not to encash them as there were no funds immediately available.

Nepomuceno said no one has the right to question the intention of the First Couple to help the athletes, "much less to suggest that such assistance was made purely for purposes of gaining publicity."

"When a person helps another, it is not proper for a third person to question the motives of the person providing the assistance," Nepomuceno said.

Buhain lauds athletes for 'getting job done in 2003'

CALLING them the lifeblood of local sports, Philippine Sports Commission chair Eric Buhain yesterday praised the athletes for getting the job done in 2003.

He urged them to face the challenges of the new year and 2005, when the country takes its turn to host the Southeast Asian Games.

"Thank you very much for making us, Filipinos, proud to have a fighting core of national athletes like you. Despite the hardships and the limited resources, you came through it all and gave your best. We also thank you for the fourth place finish in Vietnam SEAG (games)," he said.

Chairman PCI millionaire incentives from Malacañang were released by the PSC to the athletes last Dec. 22. The Philippine Basketball Team, which is in Vietnam with 10 gold, 14 silver and 71 bronze medals.

"The government tries to reciprocate in whatever way it could in getting back to the athletes the support they deserve, including the incentives," said Buhain.

The PSC also thanked the First Gentleman for helping the athletes "up to the last minute (of their Vietnam stint)."

Buhain expressed confidence over a recent news report that the First Couple used the athletes to project a very pleasant side of the Presidency.

"That is totally unfair because they are sincere in helping the athletes and local sports. It even took a lot of encouragement for Attorney Nepomuceno (PSC executive director) to be prepared for the athletes," said Buhain.

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PLDT

Golf greats Tugot, Arda to PSA Hall of Fame

TWO living legends in local golf, Cristiano Tugot and Ben Arda, will be enshrined in the hall of fame during the Philippine Sportswriters Association's Annual Awards Night on Jan. 9 at the Makiki Inn Manila Pavilion.

The auto-ing achievements of Tugot and Arda spanned the rise not just of Filipino golfers but Asians in the early years of the nineteen nines, especially in the Asian Circuit where they both shot their way to unparalleled fame.

Tugot, now 49, survived a bout tragedy in his arena to become one of the greatest Filipino golfers of all time.

He is a six-time champion of the Philippine Open, one of Asia's oldest professional tournaments, including a stretch of four straight victories from 1975. Aside from a one-shot in the US Masters, Tugot also went on to establish himself as a dominant power in the local circuit.

Claiming inspiration from Tugot, Arda did the same generation of golfing stars from the Philippines.

From a ball boy and a caddie at the Cebu Country Club, he turned professional after the second World War.

It was not until the early 1960s when Arda broke into the big time, winning the first two of his three IPF Open titles in 1961 and 1962.

Despite his shortness in height at 5 feet 5, his ability to conquer the tall men from the west earned him the moniker Nantan Ben which became more famous when he became the first Filipino to play in the British Open and in the US Masters.

Arda's capture of the Japan Open which won him $25,000 and a Datsun car remains an feat Filipino have so far by a local pro in foreign land and his runner-up finish with Rudy Lalanco in the World Cup of Golf the country hosted at Wack Wack in 1977 remains unmatched.

Spurs post 12th straight victory

SAN ANTONIO—The Orlando Magic were victim No. 1 in San Antonio's current winning streak. They became victim No. 12 Friday night in the NBA.

The Spurs, led by Tony Parker, went on a 19-8 run late in the third period to defeat the Magic, 96-86.

The Duncan led San Antonio with 27 points and 16 rebounds, while Parker added a season-high 22 points and reserve Bruce Bowen had 14—his high total in his 6th NBA season.

"Every night different people step up," Duncan said. "The guys on the bench are eager to get on the floor and take their opportunity."

The Spurs began their winning streak Dec. 1 in Orlando after losing four straight and dropping into last place in the Midwest Division with a record of 5-10. San Antonio now sits atop the division at 21-10.

The Spurs were up 63-57 when Duncan hit a short jump hook with 6:48 remaining to begin the decisive run. Bruce Bowen made a corner 3-pointer with 5:34 left to make it 90-81, and Parker scored on three consecutive possessions.

In Auburn Hills, Michigan, Jason Kidd did it all—including making his first science when it mattered most.

Kidd had 24 points, 13 assists and 11 rebounds for his fifth leading fifth triple-double, and the New Jersey Nets held on for a 83-79 win over the Detroit Pistons.

Complete results:

Marst 32, Washington 84, Orange 32, Cleveland 80; Nets Jersey 83, Detroit 79; Nets 100, Memphis 84; New Orleans 108, Atlanta 94; Milwaukee 101, Indiana 90; San Antonio 96, Orlando 86; Boston 89, Houston 84; Portland 104, Phoenix 103 (OT); Seattle 109, Golden State 88; Sacramento 89, LA Clippers 83; Philadelphia 98, Portland 95; Minnesota 88

TALLEST AND SHORTEST
The NBA's tallest player China's Yao Ming of Houston at 7-foot-6 and shortest Earl Boykins of Denver at 5-foot-5 cross paths during a break in their NBA game Friday. The Nuggets won, 95-94.

OFWs see action in Bong Coo tilt

BILLIARDS bowlers from 10 countries are serving notice to the Bong Coo/RSVP Cup which kicked off yesterday at the Green Valley Country Club bowling Center in Pasig.

Bowlers representing Brunei darle dorms in Brunei, Malaysia, Guam, California, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Hong Kong and Singapore are disputing the top spots in the event hosted by the Filipino bowlers of UAE.

The tourney, in honor of Mr. Bong Coo, one of the country's greatest bowlers, is also serving as the SEA GEM OPW Bulldozer World-wide bowling Tournament.

By far prize are prizes amounting to P200,000 with the champion receiving a basic share of P100,000 plus a trophy.

Special awards include P 50,000 and a trophy to the first Perfect 300 game, P5,000 and trophy to the High Series during the qualifying games and P2,000 and trophy to the High Game.

Yesterday's opening ceremonies was graced by PBA president-elect Rene Mariveyna who delivered an inspirational talk and was later joined by the Coo in making the ceremonial roll.

The organizing committee is headed by Ms. Lucrecia se chuk, Teddy Pa se chuk, Irene Bernaes, treasurer; Ate Olivia treasurer/secretary, Dr. Bernie Fabian (sponsorship) and Ariel Bernaes (administration). Jesus Bernaes, IBCPA Online president, is official timekeeper.

SPORTSWATCH

Lopez tops Cebu run

LIMA, Dec. 15 (UPI) — Lorena and Ida-wirdy Meneses came from behind to edge Peru's Ana Lopez in the women's 10,000 meters on the final day of the track and field competition at the Bolivarian Games on Saturday.

Lopez, who had led for most of the race, finished in 32 minutes, 46.2 seconds, while Meneses was timed at 32:46.4 and Ida-wirdy Meneses at 32:46.6.

Lopez, who had led for most of the race, finished in 32 minutes, 46.2 seconds, while Meneses was timed at 32:46.4 and Ida-wirdy Meneses at 32:46.6.

RP pug in rankings

CHICAGO — Filipino Rudy Lopez no longer runs the top 10 when the World Boxing Association released its rankings last month. The Tarlac City-raised Lopez, with an overall record of 26-1-0 with 19 KOs, successfully defended his Pan Asian Boxing Association title last Dec. 16 in Batangas, Batangas, knocking out Thai Prayun Sor Sungsit in six rounds. The win will most likely catapult the WBA No. 14 Lopez into the top 10. Meanwhile, the Lopez stablemate, dubbed "Battle in Batangas 2," will be slated today Sunday 4 p.m. over at IBC-13. Zaldan Lagandaya, Contributor

Provincial bets win

JOHN, Mayor of Quezon City, John Anthony Rodriguez is expected to lead the Quezon City delegation in the provincial assault with victories over seasoned in the boys' 14 under division yesterday in the 2002 Milo Junior Tennis Cup at the Fausto Sports Center complex in Pasig. Alban weighed in with a 6-3, 6-4, victory over Jeffrey Ng of Marikina, 6-3, 6-4, and Manolo-nidget Juan Carlo Pimbar of South Cotabato, 1-6, 6-1, 6-4. Sachiko Kawata Sandra of Cagayan de Oro City stunned Lala Lacson 6-1, 6-3 and Jaime Sison Jr. to advance to the semi-finals. Other winners were Jeffrey Ng over Jaime Sison, 6-1, 6-3 in the boys under 16th contest organized by IBM and supported by Nelson Sabio, adidas and Milo. Alban Ady '99 over Sison's Kids with Philip Lacson.

SEA-M Christmas present

ASHBURN, Virginia — Washington Redskins defensive lineman Lavar Arrington got the big Christmas present he wanted on Friday, agreeing to an eight-year contract extension worth a reported $56 million. The deal, which according to reports includes a $20 million signing bonus, will make the 25-year-old one of the highest paid defensive players in league history. "Lavar Arrington is a franchise player," said Redskins owner Daniel Snyder said. The second overall pick in the 2000 draft, Arrington has registered a career high 112 tackles this season, along with six sacks and two fumble recoveries. AP

I am running

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

A FRIEND of mine wanted to know if I was running in the May 2004 elections.

"I guess I am," I told him. "I am a Filipino citizen. I can read and write. I am not an ex-convict. I am not insane."

"Are insane or congressman?

"You still unsure," I said. "Yes for sure I am running."

He said the tricycle driver of our town have prepared a manifesto urging me to run for mayor, or "some 20,000 of them have signed already."

Amazing. There are only close to 30,000 voters registered in my town.

"The 20 thousands people and high school students have signed the manifesto," he said. "For as they are concerned, you are more lovable than the 44 Juan Tamad."

He said there's more a tug of war between my constituents on the one hand and my constituents in the second district of Pangasinan on the other.

"The truth is, a similar campaign to draft you for congressman has been snowballing the last two months," he said. "Thousands of your fellow local servants initiated in the towns of Urdaneneta, Aguilar, Bugallon and Laingayen have banded together to rally behind you."

Aguy! Isot kasia, Kuya.

I am flattered, indeed.

My maternal grandmother is a Caballes from Urdaneneta. My mom is beautiful. Her namesake, her daughter, Remedios, took after her so that Remedios became queen of Pangasinan when beauty contests then were held on the basis of brains and beauty and not money and popularity.

"You may not know this, but many of the town and city mayors of your mother's clime of nature know you," my friend said. "They are not only dying to meet you. They want you badly to run for congressman."

My mother's father, Ahmad Serrano from Lingayen, had the honors of Apalisoks and the bishop of Dagupan.

"Oh, he was a most respected citizen during his time," my departed mother would always say when talk waxed to Tatay Ahmad after family dinners back in the old days. The unfortunate thing was, I was barely two years old when Tatay Ahmad died.

As a kid, I had always wanted to serve the people. That commitment was reinforced when I got hold of Mars Ledesma's first book. But somewhere along the way that passion was overrun by events. One such event was meeting my wife, Ma. Remedios, who spoke with words. They became my world, more lasting than time itself. They still are.

And now, all too suddenly, it's starting to sound me again: politics. My mother was, to begin with, a politician all her life. She visited

For info on the Calendar's outlets, text HOTspace<COLUMBIA then send to 2200. Watch AUTO EXTREME every Sunday 3:30PM on GMA 7 for free invites to the Launch Party!

The best and the worst

THE BOARD Autopsy has chosen the best and the worst performers in local racing for the year that is about to end.

Here are three choices:

•Horse of the Year—Unanimous pick, one of course, Wind Shower.

•Jockey of the Year—Racing fans voted Jeffrid Zobel, mainly because of the impact of his riding style. Wind Shower, They could have chosen Jay Gilmore again for the latter made thousands of fans happy when he led unsurmountable favorite Sun Dragon unsuccessfully. Or them, they've an "Un-Jockey of the Year" vote.

•Horsemaster of the Year—Popular sportsman Hermie Esguerra got the local nod as his mighty stable emerged unchallenged for the third straight year.

•Trainer of the Year—Horace Hizon-Antig for superbly conditioning Wind Shower and the rest of the Esguerra fertile horses.

•Comeback Jockey of the Year—Jovan Diaz. Despite being bogged by injuries, the "Maverick" remains to be the country's premiere jockey.

•Most Promising Jockey—Given the right breed, Analyn Serrano, the country's lone female jockey, could easily join the big guns in Class A.

•Apprentice Jockey of the Year—Joel O. Francisco. From among this year's bunch of long reps, he appeared to be the most promising.

•Most Improved Jockey—Eddy F. Imbesolo. Although his rides come only in Sickles, Salvador has managed to host some winners.

ONE WINNER

Salvador Villanueva

•Biggest Upset of the Year—Red Star Rising winning the 2Yo Presidential Gold Cup.

•Memorable Event of the Year—Wind Shower's farewell bash during the Wind Shower Racing Festival.

•Group of the Year—Tie between the Manlio and Philfoods stable guy tug with their breeders' Cup and Metro Cup victories, respectively.

•Racetrack/Club of the Year—Still the home of the King of Sports, the Philippine Racing Club.

•Heartbreak Horse of the Year—Tie between Wind Bound, who was denied a Triple Crown sweep and edged by Red Star Rising in the PGC, and Insanity Blazer, who collapsed and died a few days after winning the Manlio 2YO Colts.

•Unrecorded Racing Scene of the Year—Tie between the Alfredo Fo Dennis Camalesco gesticulating, et, tell phone-pointing incident and questionable interference of horses from Emerald.

***

To all those celebrating their big/big/big/big natal days/birthdays we do/wanna say we can.

At si mga tarantado, Happy New Year sa inyong lahat!

RED Star Rising (partly hidden, second from left) rivals in the early going of the recent Presidential Gold Cup as Ramona Story storms in her way while West Bound (7) runs alongside. Marcelo Mateo

Open Classic race today

Red Star Rising seeks repeat over West Bound

ALL eyes will be on Red Star Rising and West Bound when the Philracom Open Classic Championship gets going today at the Sta. Lucero Leisure Park in Carmona, Cavite.

Red Star Rising edged West Bound in the recent Presidential Gold Cup and will try to prove that his win was no fluke.

But West Bound is expected to go all out and hope to exact revenge in today's P1.67-million event, the last major race for 2003.

Red Star Rising, owned by Francis and Michael Dilliana, will be partnered again by jockey Marcelino Duque as they bid for a second consecutive classic win.

West Bound, to be handled by Jonathan Hernandez, will attempt to rebound from four consecutive runner-up defeats in top honors races.

Sharing the limelight with Red Star Rising and West Bound are seven other top-notch gallopers, including Star Imperio and Dave crossbred Isreal Jovela.

The imports' charge a lod for recent All-Im-

pore Championship Race winners Career Pic, retaining stablemates' final show and Royal Circuit, as well as unraced Import/campaigner and PRA Cup winner Bronze Sirty.

The other heats posting the 12,000-meter race are Oblisden, New Wind and veteran campaigner Dondonera.

The winner of the race will get P1 million.

Today's racing program starts at 1 p.m.

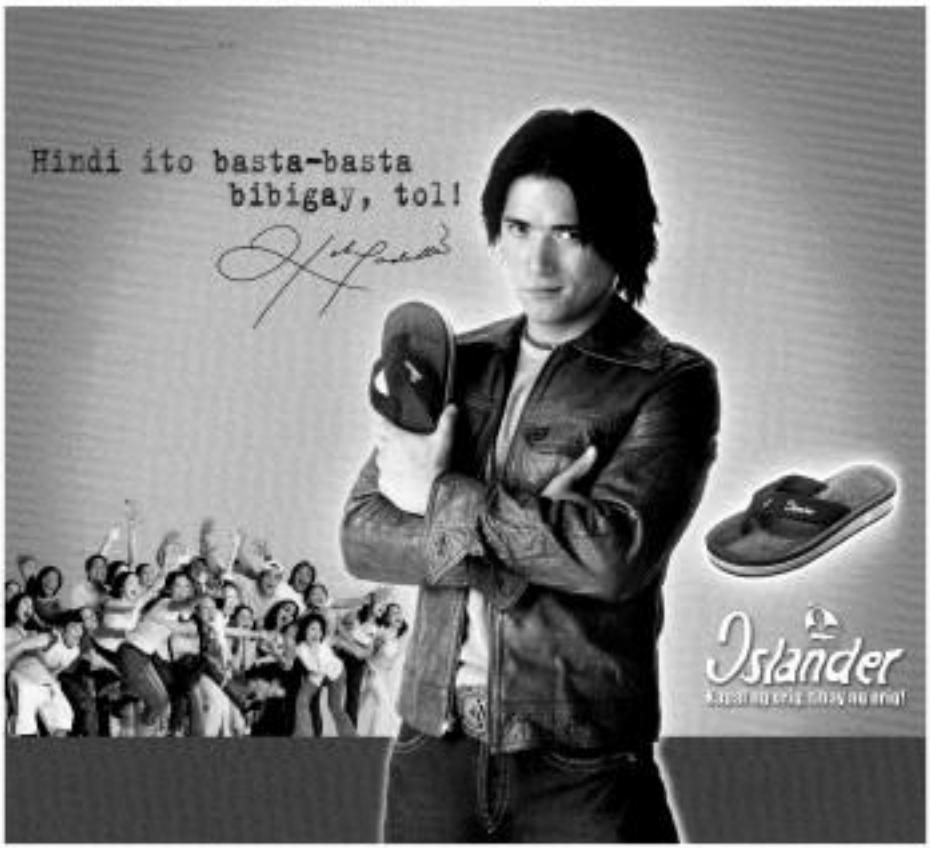
Meanwhile, multiday races now in the PCCP tomorrow (Dec. 29) and Wednesday (Dec. 31) and will resume on Jan. 2 to 4 (Friday to Sunday).

Jungolf meet at Midlands

THE PICTURESQUE Tagaytay Midlands Golf Club will host the inaugural Philippines-Japan Junior Golf Friendship tournament on Jan. 3-4, 2004.

The cream of the present crop of local jungolf will square off against the Philippines' 540 against their Japanese counterparts in the 36-hole event designed to promote regional unity through sports.

Jayvie Agojo, Jhino Ardina, Miguel Talavera and Ali Ramos, who will be cited by the DSA for their incremental exploits in 2003, will banner a star-studded contingent formed by the Junior Golf Foundation of the Philippines.



Sunday BIZ

E-mail at: business@inquirer.com.ph

Business Features Editor Margie Quiroga-Espino

First female finance head is no stranger to the job

By Clarissa S. Batino

JUANITA Amatong, the recently-appointed finance secretary is walking like her predecessors.

She is not an investment banker nor is she popular among market players. She flaunt up when upset and is impatient for results.

Years in the bureaucracy have prepared her for the challenging job she has been quietly doing. Frustrations in public service, for her, is part of the hazards of the vocation she has chosen.

Swearing in this 46th secretary of the Department of Finance (DoF) is the first female head of the DOF.

A member of the elite group of the Philippines' "First 100 Women," the Finance Chief received the citation during the country's centennial celebrations for being the first woman executive director of the World Bank Group for an eight-country constituency.

"I may be a strange face in the market but I am no stranger to the job. They have to test me and I can prove that I am capable and experienced," says the reluctant finance chief.

She is the assistant secretary of Jose Isidro N. Camacho, who left the government permanently in November due to frustrations with a politics he never learned to succeed and exhaustion from a job that exposed him and his family to unwanted and unwarranted attention.

FINANCE Secretary Juanita Amatong during the loan agreement signing and exchange of documents at DOF with Kuniki Tango of Japan.

Never desired

Amatong says she was in Cebu attending a conference when she received a phone call from her former boss, advising of his decision to leave and to float as her what she claimed were supposed fallacies and a position she never sought.

"It is a job I never desired because I was happy working in the background. This week, I already have a lot of things that I need to do, especially the social work," says the three-week-old finance chief, who adds that she now has to rely on others to do the mundane errands-ing for her.

First job

Amatong started working for the the Finance Department in 1971 as a senior analyst.

Back then, the finance and monetary functions were still interwoven and she was overjoyed by the executive assistant at then Prime Minister and Monetary Board Member Cesar Virata.

Her first job was as an economic planning officer at Philippine Economic Zone Authority (PEZA) from 1979 to 1980. She finished her BS Business Administration from the same university in 1975.

She gained experience as a tax economist of the International Monetary Fund from 1982 to 1986.

She gained her MA in Economics and Public Service from the Syracuse University in New York.

Amatong worked DOF and Central Bank assignments from 1977 to 1986. In 1986, she became assistant secretary at the DOF and was then appointed as undersecretary in 1995.

She left the DOF in 1998 to join the World Bank until late 1998, where she became the executive director of an eight-country constituency that included the Philippines. She worked with the private sector for a while before agreeing to go back to Finance Undersecretary in March 2001.

Not a banker

"I am not a banker because my experience had been with public finance. I admit that Lito's shoes were too big for me to fill in the area of banking. But maybe, what the DOF needs is a public finance person," says Amatong.

It helps that the new finance secretary is married to a politician and hails from a political clan. Amatong's husband, Ernesto, is a former representative of Dipolog City, while her brothers are also in politics in their province in Region IX-Mindanao.

But that doesn't mean she is blind to the debilitating politics that Camacho ran drowned.

"There is a problem with the structure that we have to work with the system and try to achieve our objectives. There are so many bipartisan reforms that Congress has to pass and we hope they can be convinced that enacting the crucial measures, particularly the restoration of the excise, would be critical to the fiscal program of reducing the budget deficit over time," explains Amatong.

AMATONG says she has no desire for the post but now faces the challenge.

Barely two weeks after leaving the government, Camacho suddenly blurted out that the Philippines was in a fiscal crisis, its level of debt could be unsustainable and that the political system was not equipped to

(CONTINUED)

Narda's back; hits catwalk for Igorot crafts abroad

By Vincent Cabreza
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

BAGUIO CITY—After a 15-year absence, fabric importer Narda Capuyan is hitting the Asian and European catwalks again.

Wearing tapiseo, Ifugao textiles and other indigenous Filipino woven fabrics, Narda cut her crossover into 21st century party dresses, trimmed them with indigenous accessories of metals and displayed her new creations before the world in a three-day end-of-the fiscus in October at the Petronas Towers in Malaysia. She is scheduled for future shows in Japan and in Italy.

Capuyan, a multi-awarded entrepreneur, has labeled her new product line "Into the Wind," and is forging ahead with golden and dark-colored patterned fabrics—a perfect costume accessory to the native pareau and resplendent mesh gowns that characterized Narda's line of fabrics in 1982.

Capuyan is also tapping into New Age philosophy by sampling spirit crystals that evoke the natural luminosities of indigenous textile designs.

She bought factory overruns to making mesh for coats, and even assigned them with costume beads and chemicals into clothes for a largely uncapped nylon market.

Her own guidelines and popularity of her new products are an unusual development for the more subdued indigenous fashions scene, she admitted.

Hot Igorot items

But Capuyan has a sweet success for blazing the fickle fashion world again.

"Every time I have these shows, I bring along Igorot crafts and textiles to boost. It's been decades since Igorot artisans and crafts were hot items in Europe, but I have realized that the world is ready again for our ethnic expertise. This is one market we can tap, especially now that the country is in crisis," she said.

Capuyan said the niche export demand for native fabrics and crafts stalled in 1989 due to a lack of support from the communities that make and use them.

The former model, however, won't be pushing for the international markets without a safety net. This time, she is letting the fabric communities market their wares abroad, through a new support fund called the Weaves Foundation, using a new label called "Village Lass."

Shell awardee

Capuyan is a 1982 Golden Shell awardee for launching an export career on the textile strength of indigenous dual fibers.

But in an old Ifugao weaving technique that uses a system of tying and dyeing by staple threads that are bound to an injection hook.

Capuyan demand tap bags, blankets, scarves, place mats and bedroom suits with that. She received this overseas into mainstream interior design contracts in the last five years.

Her handbags caught the attention of Women's Wear Daily in New York. She managed to break into Bloomingdale's in 1986.

"Between 1983 and 1988, I was getting orders from JC Penney and Fashion's Bay for two million pieces each month. I had 400 workers toiling to make those orders," she said.

Capuyan hailed a new export line when her fabrics helped sell indigenous basics; vegetable baskets and Ifugao sculptured utensils to American, German, French and Japanese stores and malls.

"The best years for the Igorot products were when inventory's resurgent years between the end of the Marcos dictatorships and the dawning of the administration of former President Estrada. Estrada, the country was vibrant. Everyone was selling, investors else was buying. It was a good time for the Igorot."

But the demand dried up to-

FUTURE shows are scheduled in Japan and in Italy.

NARDA Capuyan and model at the Petronas Towers in October where she displayed her new creations at the Eco Fiber and Textile Forum.

wards the 1990s. The July 16, 1990 earthquake and the 1991 Mt. Pinatubo eruption affected most industries in Northern Luzon but mostly a decade.

A supply glut in fine products and a supply vacuum in Igorot crafts also accounted for this industry reversal.

Hardly any raw materials spurred that economic bust, but few saved the market in the pushing. Businessmen designed "bad points" and other Igorot artifacts.

Silk project

"Unfortunately now that needs to rely on indigenous resources that have been in scant supply. We have been using lapwood silk but the makers in past as vulnerable as the rest of the garments industry because the thread distributors have been hit hard by smugglers," she says.

Since 1993, Capuyan had been busy marketing a silk production project, through her sister in Phil. Inabi, a joint venture manufacturing firm.

Despite an inflow of $11 million from her Italian partners to put up a processing plant in South Cotabato, Capuyan's Filipino partners have been unable to turn government interest in the venture.

"Local banks feel we will not have a real market for mulberry (where silkworms thrive), so no bank wants to underwrite our share of $6.5 million," she says.

The project hopes to process 10 tons of cocoon silk, which local suppliers are obliged to buy for $7 a month.

Capuyan's stake in Phil. Inabi has remained dormant. She said her failed to revive the venture by pitching the project to Agriculture Secretary Leonardo Montemayor. Last summer, she finally flew in worked in the mulberry farm under-size the defunct Philippine Silk Inc. in Lemog City.

But a time, Capuyan recounted once a trade that spelled trouble for her career: the weighing [illegible] old-hand bargain goods! Soon now for the quickie diamond herself from the stoned hand business when she invested over-

seas broken about some of her Mt. Province products.

"When I was no one of my business partners, I was confused about the fraud business I had brought with me, about to the indigenous tapestries were harder than farmers and farmers use to store valuables. We've been buying baskets from a small village in Mt. Province, and the foreign buyers loved them," she says.

Capuyan says this soundproof interest in birds convinced her to use her export clout to direct investments and buyers to a sustainable of Igorot craftsmanship.

"Interest in the trades could finally make the government realize that the Igorot industrial silk production project is a sound proposition," she says.

"The technology we are using is the advanced than the silk processing plants of Korea and Brazil, where most of the raw silk supply is sourced out from Thailand is nothing to buy from us if we start now. All the silk we can supply could start a real deal to dazzle and save the garments business."

Home improvement shop to expand

BAGUIO-BASED Do it Best Corners, the fastest-growing home improvement store chain, is looking at continued growth in 2002.

Company president Willy Co revealed that they remain bullish with their expansion plans. This is in line with their objectives of providing the public with the widest choices on hardware and home improvement products at the best prices.

Handyman recently marked a major milestone with the opening of its 50th store in December 2001 at the Elizabeth Mall in Cebu.

"This is very significant for us because it shows the confidence and trust that the public continues to give the Handyman chain. We have grown steadily through the years and will continue to do so," said Co.

In 2001, at least four stores will be opened, two of which will carry the new big box warehouse-type format limited inside shopping malls, the first of its kind in the Handyman chain of stores. Meanwhile, will undergo a major replacing into the format of Do it Best Corp.—a leading US-based hardware cooperative Handyman joined in 2000.

With the membership, Handyman now enjoys access to over 70,000 imported hardware and home improvement products.

Do it Best Corp. also lends its expertise to Handyman in terms of adopting a more customer-friendly

layout and better shopping ambiance.

Handyman and Handyman Do it Best currently have 40 stores nationwide. The Handyman store opened in July 1994 in Robinsons Galleria.

This paved the way for the innovative concept of offering basic home repair and improvement needs (now more popularly known as the do-it-yourself format).

This year, Handyman opened six stores located at Robinsons Place Dasmariñas, Robinsons Place Lipa, SM Square Cebu, Robinsons Ilo Ilo, Robinsons Cabanatuan, Robinsons Bacolod and Pacific Mall Lucena.

Increased customer traffic

Co also said that Handyman sales and customer traffic were ahead of the previous year.

"And we expect the same thing to happen next year," he said.

This may be attributed to the stores' quality products, try out brands, competitive pricing strategy and great customer service.

"We focus on the lifestyle of the customers and make sure that our merchandise fit their needs. The assortment of products has also improved," Co said.

New products, more brands

The expansion plans in 2002 would be complemented with the introduction of new products, services and innovations.

"We will continuously improve our merchandise mix, introducing more items to address our growing customers' specific and specialized home improvement needs. This move would give Handyman a more focused product selection that would give our customers more reasons to shop at our stores," said Jody Gadia, general manager of Handyman.

Handyman Do it Best Corners distinguish themselves from other home improvement and hardware stores by providing a customer-friendly shopping environment.

"Here, when you walk in, you will immediately feel at home," said Gadia.

Handyman Do it Best also takes pride in its staff.

"Our stores are manned by courteous and knowledgeable personnel. They undergo special training," Gadia added.

Handyman Do it Best also conducts scheduled free classes and product demonstrations on customer home concerns such as home safety and advanced computer surveillance, cleaning techniques for the modern housewife, quick and easy toilet repair, and work-saver and appliance use of power tools, among others.

Sales promotions are also held periodically in the stores where substantial discounts and free gifts with purchase are offered to customers.

THE FRUITS of Rodolfo Tuanqui's labor are ready from from his farm.

Former seaman finds gold in farming

By Joyce Pangilinan and Ronnie Lumijo
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

NOJARGUI, Albay—Rodolfo Tuanqui of Barangay Nogo in this agricultural town has found gold in his 8,000-square-meter farm by transforming its use for various agricultural crops, making him one of the best farmers in his community.

Nearly five years ex-farming, Tuanqui has converted his almost one-hectare farm into a productive enterprise, giving birth to other businesses that supply raw cassava, the needs of his family his also of others.

PINOY ENTREPRENEUR

Early career

Tuanqui, 55, was a barangay captain from 1968 to 1997 and worked as a seaman from 1965 to 1984.

After almost nine years of traveling in different countries, especially in Europe, he decided to go back to his hometown and put into practice what he learned about agriculture in the Aquaria University, where he finished his bachelor of business in animal husbandry.

Aside from his educational background, his personal experiences during his travels abroad drove him to start engaging in farming.

He had also worked as livestock in charge of a big farm in Ghana, Syria, which also helped him to be more familiar with the farming business.

"I had been into farming even before I became a seaman. It was, however, just not as serious as this one now," Tuanqui recalls, adding he has been interested in farming since he was a child.

He started his farm with the lot at the back of his three bedroom bungalow. It is an integration of various crops and livestock. He adopted the multi-story farming system and maximized every inch of his farm.

Tuanqui has in his farm different kinds of plants like banana, coffee, cacao, papaya, lanzones, rambutan, pineapple and coconuts. He also has ornamental plants that add beauty to his farm.

Although his backyard farm has less than a hundred trees, he is raking in thousands of pesos from various crops and their byproducts.

Diversification

"I believe that it is in diversifying that a farmer gets to earn his income because he has more options and alternatives in working for the major crop in the production," he says.

"And there is a fallback in case one of the crops could not produce the expected yield due to pests and diseases and unexpected natural calamities," Tuanqui adds.

He also maintained a piggery in his backyard.

In a neighboring barangay, he cultivated his 8,000-square-meter rice field, planting legumes as in-between and along the dikes. He adopted technologies like the application of a combination of organic and inorganic fertilizers, mulching, inverting the soil for disease control and others that could enhance his production.

He says he would combine all dried leaves and animal manure in a compost pit located nearby the house and would mix these with the inorganic fertilizers, which he buys from the market.

Oasis of businesses

His farm has become an oasis of different businesses. He has a lumber business, derived from the panels ground in his backyard. He claims he ventured into the lumber business because he has a love for wood. He observed that it was the most sought after body wood here in Europe and America due to its

CONTINUED B4

First female finance head . . .

From page B3

solve the problem.

"In checking as it area where he engaged, the financial markets again moved to Cotanchet's bidding and again came a massive panic and massive spreads on Philippine dollar bonds. Cotanchet's comments grabbed the business headlines the same day Moody's Investors Service reviewed for a country assessment.

No fiscal crisis

"I don't think the term fiscal crisis is correct. We have fiscal problems because we don't have a huge dollar loan it has not reached crisis proportions. We have a huge debt because we borrowed too much and the current situation is an accumulation of budget deficits in the last several years," says Abueva.

There could have been lapses in administration in the past, which led to an erosion of the tax revenue base, she notes. But even that is being addressed already, thanks to efforts initiated by Cotanchet.

"I intend to restore the fiscal discipline started by Lito. There is not much that can be done in six months but we are working all fronts and doing our best," says Abueva, who met over the eight-hour of stationery with her former boss.

Right now, she has her hands full with never-ending meetings, time-consuming public engagements and nerve-wracking policy decisions to worry about what ex officials do not say.

Hacienda farming without the 3 evil '*isms*'

By Frank Cimatu
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

MALOLOS, CBN—Haciendas, those hundreds and even thousands of hectares of agricultural land owned by a single family, may be a thing of the past with the entry of the Aguinaldo Land.

But the Land Bank of the Philippines, which was primarily established to help the landless farmers, is now looking at haciendas for a radical way of increasing agricultural productivity.

"We have to admit that the haciendas then were more productive because they were run as a corporation. Corporate farms are more productive than land fragmented with each farmer farming their own small farms," says Maximo Feliciano, assistant vice president of the LBP and head of its development assistance department. "Because of land reform, productivity had gone down."

Now, not unlike the haciendas system or corporate farming without barking back the old three 'evils' (imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat capitalism), LBP is introduced the integrated corporate farming system (ICFS).

Feliciano says the ICFS targets farmers cooperatives, whose members occupy a contiguous tract of land totaling 50 or more hectares. The land must be within 15 kilometers of a post harvest facility to ensure the economics of the farm.

The LBP provided technical assistance to train the farmers manage these "neo-haciendas" and introduce better technology to ensure more productivity.

The coops (cfws) are trained in cooperative **entrepreneurship as well as pre-harvest**, production, post-harvest and marketing technologies, Feliciano says.

The LBP also provides a start-up capital for the cooperatives and help in providing marketing linkages. After a year, technical consultants hand over the management and ownership terms to the cooperatives.

"Farmers are very smart by the sound of their land to their cooperatives as well as private lakes. Profit-sharing would be the norm of the ICFS," Feliciano says.

The ICFS was conceptualized two years ago and was tested in Nueva Ecija last year. Feliciano said they were concentrating on palay production first and would try to go into other crops.

Pilot program

The 1,200 -farmer Pulo Producers Cooperative (PPC) based in San Isidro, Nueva Ecija, for the pilot implementation of the program. They started with only 30 farmers occupying 44.9 hectares of rice land. The farmers obtained a loan of P620,000 from LBP. Prior to the ICFS, the farmers were producing an average of 56 cavans of rice per hectare.

But after ICFS, the PPC farmers' income grew by leaps and in their first run, the farmers increased their yield to 81 cavans per hectare. They earned a capital buildup of P10,000.

Their second run was very encouraging. Membership in their ICFS rose to 77 farmers and the cooperative farms they now till increased to 106 hectares. Their earnings had gone up to P4.1M million and they had increased their capital buildup to P764,000. Through the transfer of technology they had increased their yield collectively to 120 cavans per hectare.

Cagayan Valley next

Emboldened by the suspicious success of the PPC, LBP has set in sight in Cagayan Valley, acknowledged as the "rice bowl of the Philippines."

Last month, LBP president Benjamin Sevaa signed a memorandum of agreement with the Cagayan Valley Agricultural Technology Foundation (CVATF) for its next ICFS entrant. The CVATF will help the Solana West Farmers Cooperative (Sowefacco) in Barangay Ubang in Solana, Cagayan. The Sowefacco will have 79 of its farmer-members participating in the ICFS over 195 hectares of palay farms.

CVATF president Reynaldo Antolin says they would introduce the corporate farming technology, hybrid rice farming and hog fattening to augment the farmers' income. After a year, the Sowefacco will take over.

After Solana, the ICFS will be introduced in Digao City in Cauayan del Sur and Divinsoal Bilbao, LBP officials says.

GOVERNMENT runs teams on haciendas to increase productivity.

Former . . .

From page B1

biodegradable fibers and therapeutic effects.

He now supplies loofah products such as **bath and dish sponges, decorative items and** slippers to different stores in the province. The business has given employment to evacuees in **their barangay and neighboring villages.**

He is also into making extract, coco sauce and biscuits (all essential byproducts) for his consumption and business purposes, as well.

He also sells seedlings to other farmers who **are interested in venturing into agriculture.**

He even created a small cooperative called Alyn Multi-Purpose Cooperative that now has 30 members in the third district of Albay and neighboring towns of Camarines Sur.

Recognition

With his extraordinary farming and entrepreneurial skills, Tuangco was recognized by the Department of Science and Technology as a national Magsasaka Siyentista under the former Science Business Pride Program in 1999.

As Magsasaka Siyentista, he is part of the PDP network, which implements a new extension delivery strategy using the farmers not only as information seekers but also a source of valuable information to other farmers.

According to the Department of Agriculture regional office based in Pili, Camarines Sur, Tuangco was credited also to the PDP program because of his commitment and dedication to his role as extension scientist. He has also significantly influenced his fellow farmers.

He introduced to his fellow farmers the latest, cost-effective and agro-ecology friendly technologies that he uses in farming.

He has also been nominated in Gawad Saka Search for Outstanding Seconal Farmer in 1999-2000.

Since then, he has been invited as a resource person in various regional and national events that concern farming industry.

His farm is frequently visited by different groups for educational tours, especially by agriculture students and farmer organizations from Albay and different provinces in the region.

Poor market

"But the problem lies in marketing. Even though our wants to produce more, like our loofah business, our market is very limited," he claims.

He says that, at first, they found it too difficult to market their products. His wife, Fe, says some store owners were at first hesitant to buy their products, forcing her to make a consignment agreement until it worked well.

But despite poor market, Tuangco manages for sources buyers, especially in Polangui, and keeps promoting his products.

His wife, four children and other relatives help him in marketing the products.

Tuangco says he earns hundreds of thousands of pesos annually just from the sweetwater barts. He, however, refuses to reveal the exact figures.

He warns the Filipinos are lucky enough to have a soil that is fertile and season that are suited for agricultural business.

"We just need to be industrious enough to maximize what the Lord has given us, and that will spare us from poverty and hunger," he advises.

Weddings & Engagements

Sunday LIFESTYLE

A personal and memorable 25th

Friends are 'shocked' to learn that the couple kissed on their first date

THE HAPPY Silver couple during the Mass

Text by Pennie Azarcon-de la Cruz
Photos by Alexis Santiago

THE VETSIN did it.

More than 25 years after their first date, his iconic columnist Miss Jovenca Ouivil credits the Chinese lunch she had with then-Manilan's ex-staff artist-photographer Pio Durol for finally clicks in the stars on Dec. 9, 1978.

In their handcrafted "Book of Memories," the impressive giveaway during their silver anniversary bash this month, Rina writes: "From San Mig, we walked toward a theater in Avenida to take in a movie. On the darkness, Pio reached for my hand and, he says, when I didn't snatch it away, he felt emboldened and started kissing me. That's why he's always boasted that he never had to court me, since we became an item on just our first date."

The revelation was enough to move shocked admonitions from her guests, some of them college friends from the standard Democracy of Tomas Tomas to the said "No, I hope! You kissed on your first date! You did?"

But it was good-natured jostling all around, from the time the couple renewed their vows at the Archbishop's Residence at Villa San Miguel in Mandaluyong City (others Rina's brother, Fr. Reynaldo "Bobby" Jimenez, SVD, officiated in place of the ailing Jaime Cardinal Sin, the celebrant's 25 years back), to the buffet reception and dance at the post table of the Wack Wack Golf and Country Club.

Rambunctious event

Notwithstanding the formal attire, the affair was one rambunctious reunion of friends and family. Most of the guests inspired their take on the original—two 25 years ago—except for a few wheels, among Isidro's Carito Pena and, "Rina and Pio would like to apologize to. They were not invited to the wedding breakfast because of the limited guest list. At 9:25 am found an Alaska Road, marquis no long functioning hill."

This time, no expense was spared as the couple's relatives, say whole clans, flew in from abroad. The preparations took more than a year and it showed in the well-appointed décor and touches both homey and elegant.

The gown and that of daughter Miya, Gina says, were designed and made by Mitoshi Hirakawa, "a good friend who operates from one of her Silver Plums homes." Her hair and makeup were by Joseph of Salon on Paseo Road and his friend Jessie, "Bobi had been with me since after to make up Antonio de Noel," she couldn't resist adding. He's and son Pio-Pio's

CONTINUED, C2

TWENTY-FIVE years ago, they didn't have as [illegible] a crowd as Chay Raine Rhi Dino around.

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